

The role of fashion designer in  
cultivation of environmental ethics  
in consumers through fashion collections

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## **Master's Thesis**

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a research about fashion designer's engagement into the consumer perception of sustainable fashion, possibility to influence the consumer behaviour through fashion collections only and a potential to cultivate environmental ethics in audience. As sustainability is a relatively new trend in fashion, which is known well by conscious consumers, but still not spread among all other people, who are not familiar with fashion industry consequences and negative environmental impacts it causes, it is important to highlight the problems of perception of sustainable fashion in general.

Used methods for this research include a group interview conducted during the time of fashion collection creation and a literature overview devoted to the problems of fashion industry, phenomena of sustainable fashion and circularity, psychology of fashion consumption, behaviour of consumers and the role of fashion designer in production of apparel. This study also gives a summary about the activity of sustainable fashion initiatives, brands and institutions operating today and promoting sustainable values. Their work is targeted to the change of the negative perception of sustainable fashion, which is quite strong in our modern society, and support of the shift from conventional fashion towards the sustainable one.

This study examines the importance of fashion designer in changing the fashion industry, the knowledge he/she obtains and actions he/she applies to communicate with the viewers and contribute to ecology. Fashion collection as an art object can be a powerful instrument to spread ideas, and this paper investigates the probability of this, and chances to be heard by people.

The paper contains a description of a concept of a fashion collection which is an experiment aimed to provoke thoughts in viewers about ecology.

This research could be useful for the fashion designers who are eager to create fashion collections with a goal to influence their audience in order to instill some new ideas and provoke thoughts about existing problems.

**Key words:** ecology, sustainable fashion, consciousness, consumption behaviour, critical design, fashion designer

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	9
1.1. My motivation	10
2. Background	15
2.1. Research objectives	16
2.2. Goals set for research	17
2.3. Questions set for research	19
3. Method of research	23
3.1. Group interview	23
3.2. First stage	24
3.3. Second stage	26
3.4. Third stage	27
3.5. Results of the group interview	29
4. Consumption in modern society	33
4.1. Consumerism and sustainable consumption	33
4.2. People's perception of the sustainable fashion today	37
4.3. Sustainable practices implemented by modern sustainable fashion brands	42
5. The role of fashion designer in ecological and critical design	52
5.1. Ecological design	52
5.2. Critical design	55
6. Design concept	61
7. Discussion	71
8. Conclusion	101
References	103

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. My motivation



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is among the most polluting industries in the world. It creates a lot of waste, contaminates air, soil, water, presents a danger to human health because of the chemicals used during production, unfair working conditions and poor working environments for employees in developing countries, and cruel treatment of animals whose fur is used in fashion garments. All these problems can be solved with collaborative efforts of fashion designers, producers and consumers.

Sustainable fashion emerged in the 1980s and changed the people's perception of the fashion industry. This new approach gave birth to the multiple sustainable techniques, highly technological equipment and ecologically made fabrics providing significant opportunity to eliminate or even reduce to zero negative outcomes of fashion industry. Nevertheless, the major problem is not in the production but in designers and consumers. The fashion designer, as a person who creates fashion collections, is in charge of the product he creates; the consumer is in charge of the choices he/she makes in the store while buying and is responsible for the long life of the fashion item he/she owns. The link between fashion designer and consumer is extremely tight where the former is a leader and the latter a follower. To attain some considerable changes in the traditional fashion industry towards sustainable fashion these two should act simultaneously and have the identical points of view to the ecological situation in the world. It is not enough to have only one participant who is aware of the problems while another does nothing. They should play this game together. (Niinimäki, 2011).

In this case designer should be an ecologically-minded professional who would create conscious products and promote sustainable fashion values. A designer can educate through design or simply using marketing tools – advertisements, photoshoots, thematic events attracting new clientele, and social nets for further ecological education of followers and regular clients. The above-mentioned techniques are considered as effective instruments to construct a new reality and change the perception of people towards sustainability. But they exist outside the design sphere, and I would like to concentrate my attention on the design component only and make a research focusing on a design activity of fashion designers. I would like to reveal the answer to a question: “Is it possible for a fashion designer to cultivate environmental ethics through fashion collections?”. With the help of a group interview I conducted with my peers I got an overview of opinions in our modern society in terms of sustainable fashion, public perception of conscious design and reflections about the role of fashion designer through the prism of interests of those who shop high-

street brands and have never bought sustainable fashion apparel.

Creating my fashion collection, I was concentrated on eco-friendly fabrics and sustainable practices –monomateriality, recyclability and biodegradability – to prove that it is possible to create designs with less impact on nature. Moreover, I was excited to check if it is possible to bring a message about my concept to people without any usage of text prints in my fashion collection in order not to be very commercial.

## 1.1. MY MOTIVATION

My motivation is grounded in my previous experience as a fashion designer in a high street brand for young women and men. Having been a fashion designer, I was creating about thirty garments per month which then were sewn from cheap synthetic fabrics in huge quantities. The first year I was happy to realise that 200,000 items of my designs were produced per year. It meant I made 200,000 young women happier. The apparel should have been of a very low price to be affordable for the youth. The fashion garments I had to create were cheap, made of low-quality synthetic textiles. It was the main reason why they have been losing their attractiveness so fast! The second year I asked myself: “Are people buying garments of my design really happier? And does this happiness last long? Am I happy to make them happier, but compel the Earth to suffer? Am I pleased to create this future waste with the shelf life of one year? Am I satisfied to have customers who do not appreciate natural resources and are reluctant to think about consequences and environment?”

For three years I have observed an interminable circulation of a fashion garment: from me to supplier, then to stores, then to consumers, then to the waste bin and finally to the landfill. It was me who started this process. During my numerous business trips to China, where the majority of clothes of the brand was made, I observed poor conditions of working spaces for industry employees, dense smog from dyeing factories, when it was impossible to breath without an air filter mask, and immense piles of leftovers, unsuccessful samples, offcuts from the pattern cutting process. Their last station is landfills where the clothes takes five hundred years to decompose.

It was quite easy to notice that something was wrong. Something IS wrong with this industry. It should be changed as there is a real danger to contaminate pure rivers, seas, air, forests and fields. Beholding the statistics about fashion industry, what damage it produces, how much waste it generates, I feel the desire to act. It was the main reason I quitted the brand and entered Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, to

become a sustainable fashion designer. At this present moment I have a strong intention to contribute to sustainable fashion industry, to reduce the negative footprint of production, to prove it is possible to create consciously, to be trendy and friendly to nature. Moreover, I'm going to tell people how to be conscious and eco-minded through my fashion collections, concepts I am using and my future fashion activity.



Fig. 1. Panoramic view of Shaoxing city, the centre of textile production and dyeing, China, 2016



Fig. 2. Air filter mask is a product which can be bought in every shop in China, 2017



## BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Research objectives
- 2.2. Goals set for research
- 2.3. Questions set for research

## 2. BACKGROUND

“The fashion industry is reportedly the world’s third biggest manufacturing industry after automotive and technology industries” (House of Commons, 2019, p. 5). It is responsible for the dramatic changes of the environment on our planet. It affects air, water, soil, forests, animals and people (McArthur Foundation, 2017, pp. 20-22).

The approach to sustainable fashion and sustainable production opened the doors to ecological perception of fashion industry in the 1980s. Niinimäki (2011) states the strong trend to eco-fashion emerged in the 1990s, but disappeared so quickly after few years as the eco-look was designed from expensive organic materials which were unaffordable for ordinary consumers. In the early 21st century, recycling of textiles was quite popular. But it is worth noticing that the recycling approach did not solve the problem of waste but consolidates it as recycled garments even of a lower quality allowed to keep the pace of consumption and production. In the period between 2006-2008, sustainable fashion finally gained the commercial popularity due to the intensive work of eco-activists, environmentally friendly production of fashion clothing, educational initiatives about garment care and other elaborations in this sphere. (pp. 24-25). Since then, considerable work has been done to promote ideas of sustainable living and conscious consumption. Presently, there are numerous sustainable techniques, highly technological equipment and ecologically made fabrics which provide a great opportunity to eliminate or even reduce to zero some negative outcomes of the fashion industry that affect our planet and human beings.

There is a plethora of governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the world working in the sphere of ecology, economy of natural resources, rights protection of humans and animals. With the help of their initiatives, plenty of laws were enacted concerning the reduction of gas emissions, water filtration and taboos on using some severe chemicals in the dyeing processes (European Commission, 2018). All these changes concern the manufacturing of fashion garments which is just a link in an extensive production chain of fashion industry. But where is the starting point of this chain? Who does start the process? It depends on the hierarchical structure of a brand, but usually the process starts with a fashion designer who is responsible for the products, services and business models (in a small brands) – the launching of seasonal collections, choosing textiles, prints and dyes, trims and decorations and the whole image which should be attractive and seductive. The fashion designer creates and proposes, and the customer admires and purchases. Is the ordinary customer in



charge of his/her choices in a fashion store? Absolutely yes, as with every purchase he/she supports environmentally unfriendly production. But does he/she know about it? That is the question! Ecological education and concern about environment are not high today even when everybody has already heard about climate change and negative outcomes of the human activity on our planet (KPMG, 2019, fig. 18). But what if fashion designer could educate people through design he makes? What if every design could bear some information to influence the mindset of average person and instill some consciousness in it?

## 2.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

My research objectives are the following:

- Find methods through which a fashion designer can cultivate environmental ethics in audience;
- Find ways to reduce negative impacts on nature during production of fashion collection;
- Define ways to make the public reflect more about ecological situation today.

The research objectives were set out of the real necessity to make some changes in the framework of the fashion industry. Being a fashion designer, I feel implicated in this ecological catastrophe happening now. Although the majority of mass-media claims there is no way to overcome this complicated environmental situation, I personally believe that collaborative efforts within the industry can provide drastic changes and reduce the negative impact of the fashion industry.

A term “fashion designer” changes its connotation. According to the latest fashion collections of high-street retailers like Zara, H&M, Lindex and others, there is an essential need for fashion designers with eco-mindset as all of these brands have presented to the public their new capsule eco-collections in past five years. Today, the fashion industry demands creative fashion designers who are eager to face fundamental ecological challenges. Currently, the fashion designer is a person who can propose not only creative and sophisticated fashion collections to audience, but also make a decision to create these fashion collections with minimal impact on nature. It requires additional skills as a sustainable fashion designer should implement various sustainable practices while designing, always remember about ways of reducing pollution and emissions during production, have an eye to durable and long-lasting materials and understand the whole production cycle of fashion garments and obtain circular thinking.

As I mentioned in my introduction, it is impossible to attain positive changes without a comprehensive interconnection between designers and consumers. Consumers are those who should be ready to consume products of sustainable fashion designers. It hinges on ecological consciousness and environmental awareness, empathy and “nature connectedness, an individual’s sense of harmonious living that connects nature, quality of life, and well-being” (Song&Kim, 2018, p. 4).

Numerous researchers confirm the fact that “consumers have limited knowledge about a green product and simply assume that it will underperform” (Song&Kim, 2018, p. 14). They can be familiar with sustainability in fashion through advertisements, but sometimes people do not even pay attention to them. Considering the time consumers are spending in stores looking through the hanging clothes, it is absolutely obvious that clothes themselves could be an instrument of environmental education. They could bear the comprehensible concept, prints and techniques that make people reflect about existing problems or provide new knowledge about detrimental effects of fashion industry nowadays. I deem that ecological education of consumers should be carried out in several directions: marketing tools with digital mass-media resources like social nets and other resources, photoshoots, merchandising instruments such as thematic shop windows, store space interiors, and fashion design approaches like:

- sustainable practices during designing and producing;
- prints (main messages) as instruments to speak with audience;
- garments that can be durable and attractive.

All aforementioned could lead to the subliminal understanding of the ecological catastrophe and push people to reflections and further acts. They would change their shopping patterns and pay attention to methods of production as all above-mentioned instruments would subconsciously create a habit to shop green products.

## 2.2. GOALS SET FOR RESEARCH

There are three main goals of my research:

- Examine the possibility of cultivation environmental consciousness through fashion design;
- Find some methods to raise awareness in audience towards ecological situation nowadays;
- Create a fashion collection which could be an instrument of ecological

education of audience.

I would like to conduct a research about possibility or impossibility of environmental education through fashion garments. I have an intention to examine some methods in design which allow designers to have a conversation with the audience. Design is a powerful vehicle to express someone's thoughts, ideas, civil positions, critics, etc. I would like to talk with my audience with the help of my own fashion collection. My main goal is to provoke reflections about ecology and thoughts about presumable change of lifestyle towards the 'green' one, using fashion garments only. It is a great challenge for me, but I have decided to create a fashion collection as a tool for provoking thoughts about environmental consciousness and a platform for future positive ideas about ecological future.

It is necessary to admit that it requires a good knowledge of critical design approach. Critical design usually provokes a fast reaction of the public and long discussion around the theme. That is why a lot of designers, who are ready to show their attitude to some problems and speak aloud about existing troubles, use critical design approach. The best thing about critical design products is that they are staying in memory for a long time and subconsciously affect person's behavior, mindset, life.

Critical design has close connection with future, it challenges the contemporary ideas presenting danger, misunderstanding or conflict in society. Moreover, such kind of ideas can limit designer's activity or daily life of society. Critical design thinking can help raise awareness and benefit considerably to problem solving. But it is worth noticing that the main "objective is to motivate people to consider their own preferable future, which has nothing to do with its probability from today's point of view, and to raise awareness of their capacity to influence it" (Jakobsone, 2017, p. 8). It means that even a role of designer in the framework of critical design approach is significant as it is he/she who is responsible for the product which bears educational component, he/she is not the person who imposes his/her own points of view to audience. Critical designer is a person who invites audience to reflect about the existing problems. Usually critical design product does not bear the solution to problems – it takes a role of thoughts-provoker only.

According to Jakobsone (2017) "critical design emphasizes the role and the responsibility of the designer in educating the users and raising awareness of their passiveness as citizens" (p. 4). Through the designed products the designer can educate, instill some morals, dogmas and ethics in audience. But it is always a subconscious process of every individuum which often takes place within several days, weeks, months after the fact of observing the critical design product. I consider that critical design

approach contributes dramatically to boost the consciousness of ordinary people and also develops the professional skills of designer. It is a well-known fact that critical designers are the game changers, deep thinkers and doers, who appreciate beliefs of other people, but always questioning them in order to construct better reality.

To achieve profound understanding of a problem and to reach my main goals I organized a group interview which could help me to investigate the needs of people, their perception of sustainable fashion apparel, their shopping patterns, their hopes and wishes about the fashion industry, their desires to learn more and become more conscious, their perceptions of the invisible connection "fashion designer-consumer" and what fashion designer could do to make consumers more sensitive towards ecological problems and to change their shopping habits. Considering my intention to use critical design, I was happy to hear what kind of visual messages could psychologically push my audience away and what could provoke strong interest and emotions. For me, it is important to leave positive impression as it never arouses the inverse reaction of observer. I mean that sometimes a very strong message which has a manipulating component can invoke reverse effect and person will defy and purposely ignore this message. In this case critical design has zero or even negative results. That is why every artist or designer should be very prudent conducting the concept ideas and choosing means of implementation in the framework of critical design thinking.

## 2.3. QUESTIONS SET FOR RESEARCH

There are two main questions:

- How can fashion designer influence people to be more conscious in terms of ecology?
- Is it possible for fashion designer to provoke thought and cultivate environmental ethics in viewers minds through fashion collections?

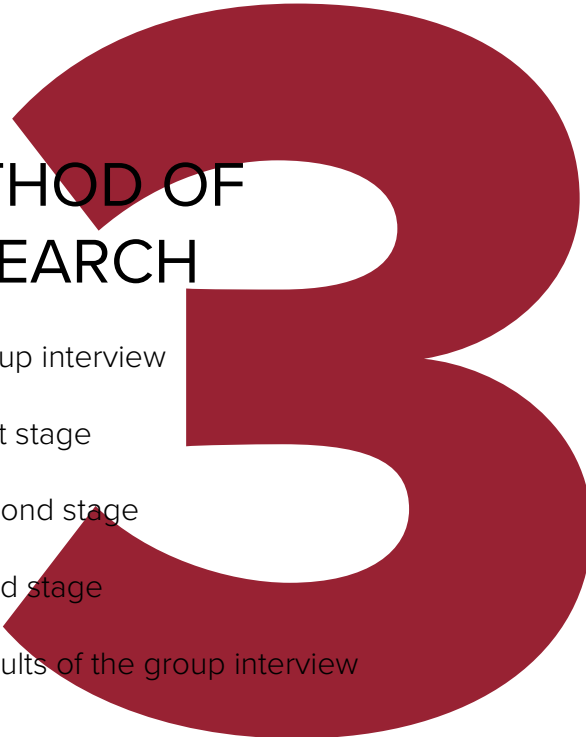
Having spent time in the libraries and on the Internet searching for appropriate sources of information, I can state that a few relevant researches were made about these issues. I have read books, articles about the consumer's behaviour and how a brand can influence his/her usual shopping pattern. For instance, an article "What about Sustainability? An Empirical Analysis of Consumers' Purchasing Behavior in Fashion Context" in a magazine "Sustainability" (2017) describes a study of a group of Italian researches. They write about growing competitive battle in the

fashion market which forces brands or fashion designers to “seek new sustainable practices with which to gain competitive advantages over their current and potential competitors. This trend seems to have fostered the development of an apparent virtuous circle: the increasing importance addressed to sustainable products and brands has stimulated companies to focus more attention on the adoption of sustainable practices, which have in turn attracted the interest of more consumers” (Ciasullo, Maione, Torre & Troisi, 2017, p. 5). The mentioned article confirms that there is a real necessity in the new sustainable approaches and new methods at the fashion market. In this case it is important to find not only the new sustainable practices, but also new approaches to raise the environmental awareness of the clients to help them perceiving these sustainable practices. It is essential to have prepared clientele and always broaden its horizons of environmental ethics. I personally believe it could be done through design.

Unfortunately, the level of consumers’ knowledge about the ecological catastrophe provided by fashion industry is very low (Markkula, 2011, p. 111). In our modern society shopping represents a leisure making people happy, it is a pure joy. The fact that this joy can be spoiled by horrific news about fashion pollution kills. It leads to a break of the ordinary shopping scenario. This news has a negative connotation and psychologically people are reluctant to dig deeper into such kind of facts not to lose their joyful mood while shopping. “In fact, consumers who tend to engage in sustainable practices are generally better informed about the consequences of their pro-environmental behavior” (Ciasullo et al., 2017, p. 2). But the main problem is that information is quite difficult to find. “One would hope that these kinds of things would somehow jump immediately in front of people... more information should be given to people” (Markkula, 2011, p. 112). The main task of fashion designers and the fashion market is to provide useful and easy-accessible information and substantiate correctly that ordinary shopping scenario should be transformed a bit for the sake of our future wellbeing. The most convenient way of getting the necessary knowledge while shopping is to deal with something that is of interest. In the fashion stores the main interest of customers is clothing and it definitely can be the main provider of significant information excluding the advertisement posters in the stores.

To answer above listed questions, it is essential to communicate with people and understand their expectations, their perception of messages sending through fashion garments, their awareness in environmental issues and also their willingness to be educated through the garments they see.

## METHOD OF RESEARCH

- 
- 3.1. Group interview
  - 3.2. First stage
  - 3.3. Second stage
  - 3.4. Third stage
  - 3.5. Results of the group interview

# 3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

## 3.1. GROUP INTERVIEW

For my group interview I gathered four young people from Aalto University with different educational backgrounds. They all are very curious, positive and responsive. They have already heard about sustainable fashion before, but did not pay much attention to this issue, though everybody had deep reflections about the ecological catastrophe provoked by fashion industry.

The members of the group:

- 2nd year MA student from Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design programme
- 2nd year MA student from Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design programme
- 2nd year MA from Collaborative and Industrial Design
- 2nd year MA student from Media Department

Even I understand that my experiment can have an inaccuracy as there are only four people in a group, I can state that my participants are the average citizens living in the big and middle-sized cities included in the societal intercommunications, thus, they are decent examples of the young generation.

There are three stages of my group interview:

1. The first one is devoted to the oral survey and discussions about ecology and designer's role in the ecological education of audience.

2. During the second stage held on-line with the same participants, I plan to present them my sketches, prints, textiles and ideas about my future fashion collection. I would like to hear their opinions about the elements, methods, colours, sustainable practices which I plan to use, and especially which of them will work better from their perspective. Analysing their answers, I will revise my work and proceed to the next and final stage – pattern constructions, sewing and fittings.

3. The last stage – the third one – should reveal deep thoughts about my fashion collection as I am going to demonstrate the result of my work – the garments from my collection. This presentation will highlight the possibility or impossibility to instill environmental ethics through fashion garments only.

The participants of the group interview are the same over the course of the whole experiment.

## 3.2. THE FIRST STAGE

I asked participants four questions which could help me to reveal some problems in our society towards sustainable fashion and the ecological issues in fashion industry.

1. When you hear an expression «sustainable fashion brand», what is the picture/association you have in mind (for example: small brand with ugly designed clothes, not stylish at all from unpleasant fabrics as hemp, linen, etc., or maybe you have other opinion)?

2. Do you shop your clothes in sustainable fashion brands? If not, what is the reason?

3. Do you believe that at present in our world full of cheap and short-term things every designer should be ecologically-minded?

4. Do you believe that a fashion designer can subconsciously influence his/her audience through fashion collections and raise some ecological awareness in it? If it is so, how?

The first stage was about one hour. We discussed these questions and even touched some other sharp issues about responsibilities of designers and the modern way of consumption. Here is my analysis derived from the conversation with my peers.

1. All participants had the same opinion about sustainable fashion brands which are expensive, a bit old-fashioned and ecological textiles sometimes are not so pleasant to touch. Sustainable brand is a brand of slow fashion business model and unique garments. Participants said it is impossible to exist as a huge fashion brand and promote sustainable values launching twenty-four collections per year. Fashionable is not equal to sustainable. Moreover, they noticed that desire to buy new clothes is increasing over years and, apparently, it is impossible to be sustainable suggesting your consumers to purchase more and more new products every month.

2. Money is the main reason why they do not shop in sustainable brands. Also, as all participant mentioned above, the style of such kind of brands is strange or old-fashioned. Moreover, they stated that sometimes a consumer has no idea about sustainable approach of the brand. Perhaps, there should be more ads in the windows of the shops or some commercials elsewhere just to let people know that there are sustainable fashion brands with affordable prices. The lack of knowledge about existence of sustainable brands is enormous in our society. Speaking about high-street brands which have conscious lines, there is an evident deficit of trust to such kind of fashion collections. People do not believe in the real ethical and ecological approach as they have been always associated

such brands with the fast fashion production and environmental problems.

3. All of them had a consent about this question. The group members added that if you are not hundred percent sustainable from the very start of your design activity, it is absolutely fine to add environmentally friendly products gradually. Small steps can change situation. Besides, more and more producers should propose ecological textiles and sustainable materials for fashion designers. All participants on the market should unite as everybody is aware about negative impact of fashion industry.

4. They agreed it is possible but complicated to implement. Fashion designer can find something to communicate with the audience, for example, symbols, textual prints, accessories, and use them in a playful manner. But at the same time the main task for a fashion designer is to produce wearable and desirable clothes. It is possible to use critical design approach, but fashion designer should pay attention to the clarity of the message as people can perceive it badly or do not understand at all. This is the main reason why the message should be very simple, clear and attractive.

Analysing answers of all group members, I made a conclusion:

Young generation is aware about environmental problems especially about negative impact of fashion industry. They believe in sustainable fashion but notice that it is quite complicated to produce sustainable clothes and survive in fashion business. As consciously produced apparel is more expensive, people prefer to spend their money buying cheaper garments of fast fashion brands instead of few but of excellent quality in slow fashion ones. People believe sustainable fashion brands are expensive, their collections are old-fashioned and unpleasant to touch. But if there are fashionable eco-brands with middle-level prices, they should do more advertising to attract people to their stores, as sometimes people do not even know that some brands with stylish clothes are ecologically-oriented. It could change the opinion of society towards sustainable clothes immensely. Now there is a strong belief that fashionable cannot be sustainable. Sustainable fashion is boring, basic and expensive. It is worth noticing that when high-street brands like H&M, Zara and Mango are launching conscious collections, consumers do not believe much in ethical and ecological side of these clothes. The poor reputation of fast-fashion brands made people suspicious towards fashion products in general. That is why there is a high percentage of trust deficit to high-street brands in our society. Nevertheless, people are ready to believe in small brands which have slow fashion approach and are transparent enough to let the consumers check the veracity of given information on the tags.

Taking into account ecological problems, every designer should address himself important questions during creation and production of the product: “Is it ecological? Does it have minimum environmental impact on nature? Is it handy or just another useless thing? What else can I do to reduce waste during production?”. Every designer should strive to apply sustainable practices to his/her own design process and make further steps to achieve great results. Moreover, textile producers could be more active and suggest more options of environmentally friendly textiles steadily excluding the conventional ones. A good example was given: an iPhone is the most stylish, handy, popular and widespread cell phone in the world now. Ten years ago, the situation was totally different as people used cell phones of other brands. The Apple corporation managed to produce perfect product to satisfy the needs of the majority of population on the Earth. Sustainable fashion should definitely take the same path: produce stylish, useful, affordable clothes to replace badly sewn cheap garments from fast-fashion brands.

Sustainable fashion designer has a possibility to speak about essential ecological problems through his/her collections and provoke some feelings and thoughts in the audience. But the main point here – this message should be understandable and easy to read. People are reluctant to get deep into complicated messages. Fashion designers can appeal to the audience through clear concept, prints or storytelling of the collection.

### 3.3. THE SECOND STAGE

The second stage of my group interview was hold on-line. I shared my sketches, a line-up and a short description of the main idea of my fashion collection with the group participants. I posed them a question: “Is it enough for you to be influenced by this fashion collection?” and asked to write several sentences about their reflections. I realize it is quite complicated to judge the fashion collection only looking at the sketches, but the most important thing here is the concept and idea of the collection.

All participants stated that the main idea is good, but they found quite complicated to understand the sustainable approach in the fashion collection without reading the explanation to it. Some of them agreed that there is no strong environmental bond and they couldn't see it through my design and prints: “Garments on their own might not communicate the message fully”. They proposed to add some expressive details to make the message stronger. But at the same time one of the respondents noticed that it is quite outstanding not to use very straightforward messages as it

makes a fashion collection not ordinary.

I expected this critic and I fully understand and respect the reaction of the members of my group. For majority of people it is quite important to have strong and straightforward message like textual prints or naturalistic themed prints to connect the main idea of the fashion collection with garments. As Stochetti M. and Sumiala-Seppänen J. (2007) state in the book “Images and Communities”, “conceptual matters, abstract and mental phenomena such as disappointment, hope or gratitude are hard to show” (p. 293). My intention to show desperation, but at the same time hope, strength and willingness to act positively and wisely without usage of the wording is complicated to demonstrate. From the very beginning I decided not to use letters in my prints since they can be considered as a direct motivation to act and can be associated with the fight for ecology and direct propaganda as I also used military details in my fashion collection. I do not pursue an idea to push my audience to the prompt actions, but want to sow the grain of sustainable seed in them. Besides, I support the point of view of Lígia Abreu, the professor of Porto University, who wrote in the article “Human rights in fashion creations, production and branding: A genuine policy or marketing strategy?” for a book “Fashion Tales. Feeding the imaginary” (2018) that “for a human rights point of view, it is possible to establish a relationship between the artistic partnership of fashion and art and the citizen's right to be informed without being manipulated” (p. 296).

### 3.4. THE THIRD STAGE

For the third stage of my group interview I used e-mail. I send the photographs of all garments in original fabric, which were made by me during the last fitting with a model. The group participants could see the final line-up, colours, prints, details, garment construction. I mentioned again the idea of my concept and asked below-mentioned questions:

1. Is it enough to instill some environmental ethics in audience,
  - a) considering the fact that audience is familiar with the concept of the collection;
  - b) considering the fact that audience is NOT familiar with the concept of the collection.
2. Do you think that text messages (text prints on garments, for instance) would work better to achieve this goal?

1.

a) All participants agreed that it is enough to provoke thoughts in viewers and make them think more about environmental problems if they have already been familiar with the main idea of the fashion collection and the concept behind it. If the concept is clear, it is possible to change gradually the perception of people towards something and instill some ethics in them. They said that my concept is clear, and it works smoothly with the garments. They drew my attention to the fact that when I am going to present my fashion collection to the wide audience, it is quite important to describe the materials and sustainable practices I used. It could explain much and give an impulse to learn more about the theme of sustainable fashion and conscious consumption.

b) All participants agreed that if a viewer is not familiar with the concept, it is impossible to connect the theme of ecology with my collection and, thus, instill some environmental ethics in him/her. There should be something to attract attention and bear the strong message.

2.

All participants wrote that prints with text messages would make the collection look cheap and more commercial. The elegance and sophisticated look can be spoiled by such prints and the “written messages sound too obvious”. Moreover, there is a note that if a fashion designer creates an artistic collection without the aim to produce it massively, it is the best choice not to use text at all and give an opportunity to the audience to read the concept and feel the connection with a fashion designer.

In my e-mail I invited every participant of the group to come and touch the fabrics I used in order to change their perception about ugliness of sustainable textiles. They were happy to feel the softness of organic cotton, organic wool and lightweight chiffon made from recycled PET-bottles. They said they would definitely wear such fabrics on daily basis and expressed the hope that the fashion industry would use similar textiles in a huge scale and, thus, would make them cheaper for an average consumer.

### 3.5. RESULTS OF THE GROUP INTERVIEW

Analysing the data of the group interview I could state that at the present moment people are familiar with the fashion industry problems, but they do not fully understand the consequences of these problems. The high- street

brands build their marketing strategies in a way that consumers still follow the shopping pattern they have already had for years. This manipulation of the consumers’ consciousness leads to overconsumption. At the same time small sustainable fashion brands should provide more information about their activity and show people how they can change their shopping scenarios. Apparently, they could pay more attention to the presenting of themselves among average consumers, who have already heard about sustainability in fashion, but still have no deep knowledge in this topic.

People have deficit of trust in the fast fashion brands, and they are eager to buy apparel at the sustainable fashion brands, but it is not so easy to find them, and the prices of the clothes are high to the average consumer. Moreover, there is a strong belief in the society that sustainably produced textiles are unpleasant to touch, cannot hold the shape well and last for a long period of time. Due to the selection of soft and nice eco-fabrics, I could dispel this myth in my group participants.

Instilling environmental ethics in audience only through garments is a complicated task for a fashion designer. Nevertheless, there are some ways to achieve this goal.

The first one is to use text prints, which can play a role of strong message and tell people about the existing problems and topic the fashion collection is devoted to. However, this approach has some disadvantages: artistic fashion collection might look cheap and acquire a commercial core in this case. Catchy messages can be considered by people as a tool to manipulate their conscious and also as a call to immediate actions.

The second one is to have a strong and clear concept behind the artistic fashion collection. It should engage people in the narrative and become the indivisible part of the whole work adding sense to the fashion collection and revealing the essence of the whole idea. It helps to stay delicate and ethical to viewers in a sense that they are not being manipulated by a short and straightforward phrase. A disadvantage of this approach is rooted in the fact that not all people are eager to read the description of the concept and reflect about it.

Judging by the answers of my group participants, people need to have strong concepts behind the artistic fashion collections. Strong concepts do not require the support of text prints on the garments directly. People lured by the appearance of the fashion collection, will read the description and try to understand the concept. Well-presented, it definitely would help to change the established views in the society and give an impulse to reflections.

Moreover, there is a necessity to present the ideas of sustainability in a clear and soft manner, not to be aggressive and give space to audience to reflect and delve into the concept itself. It is of a great importance to

use fabrics pleasant to touch to convince people that they are of the same quality or even better than the conventional ones.



## CONSUMPTION IN MODERN SOCIETY

- 4.1. Consumerism and sustainable consumption
- 4.2. People's perception of the sustainable fashion today
- 4.3. Sustainable practices implemented by modern sustainable fashion brands



## 4. CONSUMPTION IN MODERN SOCIETY

### 4.1. CONSUMERISM AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

This is a well-renowned fact that we are living in the world of consumerism. The world economy is based on the consumption. Consumption is not equal to consumerism as consumption is about consuming goods and services in general, while consumerism, as Schor stated (as cited in Markkula, 2011, p. 22), “can broadly be understood as a particular set of values and an ideology related to the late stage of market capitalism.”

Modern society striving to consume more and more to achieve well-being and prosperity. “The Industrial Revolution saw a transition from “enough is enough” to “the more the better”, rooted in production for the market rather than for oneself” (Lintott, 2007, p.43). At the present moment the world reaps the fruits of these approach suffering from overconsumption leading to considerable problems: overharvesting, environmental pollution, land usage for landfills, psychologically unstable citizens with addictive behavior towards buying, overexploitation of resources, and other problems. The term “throwaway mentality” is the best characteristic for our society which is living in the piles of poorly made, cheap and not durable products (Markkula, 2011).

Consumption is a complicated process which is connected with various spheres like culture, economy, ecology, sociology, psychology, policy, even religion. “Humans have always used material objects and consumption to distinguish themselves, but modern consumption is even more rooted in cultural desires for identity. Consumption is about satisfying the desire to define self-identity and an individual’s place in society” (Sumner, 2018, p. 33). At present, consumption shapes our everyday life and gives us freedom to be independent in choices we make. But is it true that we are happier with the levels of consumption we are having now?

Speaking about fashion industry, the pace of consumption had to speed up in the very end of the eighteenth century, when the first industrial machines for textile production were invented: cotton gin, machines for weaving, spinning, knitting. Then, a bit later in the middle of the nineteenth century a first sewing machine was presented to the public. From that moment on, the clothes could have been sewn in huge quantities, mass production emerged. The advent of the concept of capitalism enhanced and stimulated the growth of consumption in the society. (Kaiser, 2008,

p. 144). In the twentieth century globalisation brought a wide range of opportunities for the fashion industry. International communication made the distant locations and countries closer. The clothing production had to move to developing countries where lower wages for the fashion industry workers could have been paid and where concerns about ecological impact from the fashion production were not so intensively discussed. This has generated the emergence of a fast fashion model in the fashion industry which encouraged overconsumption. (Hethorn & Ulaseiz, 2008, p. xxi).

The success of the fast fashion model was absolutely obvious as fashion became democratic and accessible to all levels of the society. The huge popularity of the fast-fashion brands like Zara, H&M, Topshop gave a birth to an absolutely new breed of the fashion consumer, who makes purchases in the fast fashion brands frequently, aiming to look like the world's celebrities, updating the wardrobe on the trend-driven basis and has no desire to think about the responsibility she/he bears while purchasing and wearing inexpensive apparel. (Lewis, 2008, p. 234).

"Consumption as purchase making is represented as crucially important for maintaining welfare society and the happiness of its members" (Markkula, 2011, p. 106). From the psychological point of view, people are not just making a purchase of a fashion garment: they are buying social status, beauty, success, power to be the members of society they have never had chance to be before.

But, as conducted researches and studies show, there is no evident connection between happiness and consumption. Moreover, "consumption does not lead to overall improvement in welfare" (Boulanger, 2007, p. 43). The studies revealed that consumption makes people feel deception as there is no possibility to attain satisfaction in needs and wants fuelled by constant advertising. Thus, the desire of obtaining the new objects and services is increasing and creates overconsumption and mass addiction to purchasing practices. Moreover, the majority of people feel that their will is being manipulated, and this problem has psychological basis as it is quite difficult to resist this manipulation. (Boulanger, 2007, p. 20).

The most substantial challenges we have today concerning high-level of consumption are detrimental effects and consequences in social and especially in environmental spheres. Consumerism ideology of modern society has an ecological cost.

Fashion industry is based on the natural resources: non-renewable and renewable. With the high pace of consumption even renewable resources can be hardly replenished again so fast. "Overconsumption of natural resources by some is leading to underconsumption for the many who do not get their fair share of these resources and/or are not adequately

compensated for their loss. But the problem is not overconsumption as such. The problem is that there is a causal link between overconsumption and poverty." (Boulanger, 2007, p. 27). Overconsumption in the developed countries stimulates the underpricing and degradation of the ecological resources in developing countries, where the clothing production is taking place, and to the overexploitation of the human and natural resources and escalating poverty in the latter. "Countries have to compete against each other for inward investment and production in their jurisdiction. Because of this competition for lower wages and standards they are unable to raise their minimum wage to a level that provides for a decent life, that is, a living wage. There is a race to the bottom in terms of wages and environmental standards." (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019, p. 6).

Moreover, overconsumption has created a problem of waste which is now intensively and broadly highlighted in various mass-media. Accumulation of waste is happening because of the constant and even increasing pace of consumption. According to the report (2017) of Ellen MacArthur Foundation "A new textile economy: Redesigning fashion's future" the global clothing consumption is doubled since 2000. It accounted approximately 50 billion units in 2000 and more than 100 billion units in 2015. At the same time clothing utilisation is decreasing which is the proof of decline in wear period.

The issue of the discarded textile waste from the fashion industry is one of the most urgent. The invention of synthetic yarns in the twentieth century created from the fossil fuel was revolutionary, but at the same time it caused waste utilisation problem as artificially created yarns are not biodegradable. Above of that, microplastic particles from the synthetic fabrics shed off in huge quantities during laundry processes and pollute water basins of the Earth. There are few filters which can prevent the penetration of these microplastic fibers in the seas and oceans of our planet, but their prices are high and installation at washing machines is difficult. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017, p. 69).

This should be solved as soon as possible with the coordinate and corporate actions of consumers, governments and business corporations. Governments must establish strict laws and tax system to regulate waste management practices. Moreover, they should oblige fashion brands to open information about suppliers and keep transparency of production and distribution chains. It is necessary to create incentives to stimulate fashion brands to recycling, production of long-lasting garments and commitment to the ideology of "green" design in order to reduce overconsumption in fashion sector.

Fashion retailers should be responsible for the waste they generate and should decrease negative environmental effects during the production of

their fashion collections. The repairing service, clothing rental, recycling or upcycling should be available within the brand. Also, some educational initiatives should be exercised by the brands to let people know more about production, consumption, ecological footprint during the clothing production and so on. Transparency can open the new reality for the fashion brands and raise a new generation with eco-mindset. Along with it, all above-mentioned practices can meet the demands of a new breed of consumers who are characterised themselves as “sustainable” or “conscious”.

According to a theory worked out in 2009 by William McDounough, an American architect, designer and author, one of the leaders in the field of sustainability, and his colleague Michael Braungart, a German scientist and researcher, our present mindset is linear, as the current fashion system is, and as the history shows it doesn't work. In their book “Cradle to Cradle. Remaking the way we make things” (2009) they give an overview that at every stage of production there are negative environmental and ethical consequences leading to exploitation, pollution and waste accumulation. To change it we need to modify our mindset and the contemporary fashion system which should not be linear, but circular. A Cradle-to-Cradle approach is considered as the appropriate way to make business and produce things nowadays. It means that every product lifecycle is looped, and the end of life of one product is a starting point for the life of a new one. Thus, every designed product should be multi-cycled or biodegradable. In general, this approach assumes no waste generation. Thus, using again the resources which have been already spent to the existing products, people could help nature to restore. This consideration would also help to transform the linear mindset to the circular thinking.

Consumerism is not the innate feature of the human nature. People became the driving force of economic relations with the help of concept of capitalism. Every consumer is at the unique position when it is possible to change existing situation using money as a voice for voting. Choices that we make on a daily basis can maintain, give birth, destroy. Ben Vanpeperstraete, Lobby and Advocacy Coordinator at the Clean Clothes Campaign, considers that brands are reluctant to listen to the volition of the employees in the supply chain, but they are listening carefully to their customers and governments (Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development goals, 2019). Customers have the great power to modify the working patterns of fashion brands just by buying or not buying, by asking, by paying attention to some unacceptable fashion production using social nets and discussing it with millions of people around the world, by making social pressure towards fashion brands to take responsibility for their actions, and so on.

The transformation of contemporary way of life and mind-set should be reinforced by global understanding that sustainability is not a trend, it is the only one acceptable way to exist, it is the only path to go, it is the second nature. Sustainable practices implementing in the everyday life should become routine and habitual. “Environmental issues are “normalised” and individualised as personal, meticulous control of everyday consumption practices” (Markkula, 2011, p. 27). In this case society can change the main vector from so-called “throwaway” society to sustainable society. John Lintott (2007) in a book “Sustainable consumption, ecology and Fair Trade” asserts that there is a need for the mutual cooperation and willingness to mitigate consumption rates. Besides, “the end of consumerism requires a major shift in values and institutions” (p. 54).

Professor Tim Cooper (2019) from the Nottingham Trent University Clothing Sustainability Research Group states in the “Fixing Fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability” report that “sustainable consumption demands cultural change. The “throwaway” culture applies to the whole economy, not merely the clothing sector. If consumers are to be encouraged to buy fewer clothes, there needs to be a wider public debate on [the] future of the ‘consumer society’, including an evaluation of its benefits and costs” (p. 44). Many researches also assume that the basic point of sustainable consumption is a solid understanding of contemporary generation the needs of future generations. Having this in mind, all future steps will be taken assuming that natural resources usage is finite, waste accumulation in huge quantities is prohibited, air and water pollution are not allowed, human exploitation is not a norm, cheap products of fast production are banned, etc. The care of the future generations is the best motivation for sustainable living.

## 4.2. PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF THE SUSTAINABLE FASHION TODAY

In the modern society the perception of ecologically, ethically and sustainably produced clothes is constantly in flux. It directly depends on the ecological situation in the world, global awareness of environmental problems, people sensitiveness, interest in fashion, willingness to change something forgetting selfish impulses and so on.

“Everybody who was in eco fashion looked like a bag of potatoes”. This phrase was said by a fashion designer David Shah at the Beyond Green symposium at the end of 2007. (Brand, 2008, p. 4).

Many researchers of that time wrote about the lack of fashionable look in sustainable apparel. It has historical roots back to 1990s, when

ecological fashion emerged as pure naturalistic approach to the garment creation having used natural dyes and biodegradable fabrics such as linen, cotton, hemp and other not so appealing visually and tactilely. Moreover, all ecologically created fashion collections were quite expensive in comparison with the conventional ones (Niinimäki, 2011). Apparently, this notion of ecological, ethical and sustainable fashion collections is rooted deeply in the minds of consumers and, unfortunately, is still the same in those who do not follow contemporary trends in the fashion industry.

Since that time a lot has changed. To highlight the changes in preferences and perceptions towards the ecological, ethical and sustainable apparel, I would like to use the data from the dissertation paper of Annu Markkula “Consumers as Ecological Citizens in Clothing Markets” which was written in 2011.

Markkula conducted interviews among young people and then, summing up the results, wrote that ecologically, ethically or sustainably produced apparel was associated with ugly look and unattractive image. According to her text, there were some issues people faced, when they had a desire to buy such kind of apparel:

- body fit and comfort – people couldn’t find nicely tailored garments in the sustainable fashion brands as the majority of them had poor fit and unappealing fabrics;
- aesthetics – the style of sustainable fashion collections left much to be desired as there were no stylish garments, but only old-fashioned items having weird prints, silhouettes and textiles;
- personal style preferences – there was no wide range of sustainable fashion brands to satisfy the style preferences of consumers;
- the peculiarity of clothes in the conscious collections of mass market fashion brands – such fashion brands created capsule collections for special occasions only, not for everyday use.

It is worth mentioning that having conducted my interview with peers, I faced the same understanding of sustainably produced fashion garments from their side, and the statements about ugly garments in ecological, ethical, sustainable brands were pronounced out loud and were supported by all participants. But I would like to state that my participants are not interested in sustainable fashion much, they have never been to sustainable brand stores and have never had experience in touching and fitting sustainable or ecologically produced garments. They are not familiar with the activity of sustainable brands worldwide and, apparently, they are guided by the old-fashioned, but so common and widespread opinions about sustainably produced apparel. Besides, in order to dig deeper into

the people’s perception of sustainable fashion nowadays, it is necessary to pay attention to the most active consumers, who spend a fortune for the clothes and made up the biggest part of the solvent citizens.

The data from the recent research (2019) of an analytical agency McKinsey&Co show that young people belonging to Generation Z (over 2 billion people in age 18-29) spend approximately 150 billion dollars for shopping in the USA, will account the 40 percent of global consumers by 2020, and, thus, will be the largest generation of consumers by above-mentioned year. This generation is young, mobile, constantly living on-line and is oriented on mutual actions towards the best future: it concerns a lot about ecological problems, transparency, human rights, sexual orientation, gender equality, race, ethical, social and political issues.

According to the CGS<sup>1</sup> report “Retail and Sustainability Survey” held in 2019, when more than thousand of the American respondents were asked about their preferences and habits in purchasing, Gen Z was named as a driving force for sustainable fashion to strengthen. “For brand loyalty, Gen Z was more likely to prioritize sustainability, brand name and company mission/purpose compared with other age groups”. Moreover, answering question about value added for sustainably produced products, young people from Gen Z are ready to pay 50-100 percent more for such products and apparel in comparison with other age groups. It means it perceives the price as a combination of ethical practices, intensive labor, ecological fabrics, high quality, uniqueness, and also satisfaction from the purchase, which helps to avoid guilty feelings they have every time buying conventional clothes.

This generation is driven by capitalism as the older ones, but it has another understanding of practices to use in order to maintain capitalist model. They are more aware about fabrics, quality and ethical component of fashion. They are likely to buy sustainable apparel and then resell these high-quality garments on the resale platforms. (ThreadUp Resale Report, 2019).

Looking through the data in “ThredUp Resale Report” conducted in 2019 by the largest on-line reseller of second-hand apparel ThreadUp, the number of consumers who are eager to shop from sustainable fashion brands increased from 57 percent in 2013 to 74 percent in 2018. The new generation has absolutely fresh perception of sustainable fashion and, having lost their trust in fast fashion retailers, young people prefer to shop in sustainable fashion brands. Moreover, according to McKinsey& Co report (2019) Gen Z considers that environmentally and socially focused

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<sup>1</sup> CGS (Computer Generated Solutions) is a multinational corporation providing business applications, outsourcing and learning. Headquartered in New York City.

brands and companies are the best places to work in.

Gen Z is the generation which prefers strong concepts to believe in and requires solid proof of the sustainable and social practices. Feeling trust deficit in governments and political leaders, young people expects strong leaders in the head of the fashion brands, who can help them to fill this gap of lost faith (McKinsey& Co, 2019). That's why nowadays the most respected and well-known sustainable, ecological and ethical brands among young people are Ecoalf, Bureo, Mud Jeans, Veja, TOMS, Everlane, as well as online marketplace of second-hand garments Depop (Yeomans, 2019). All these brands have strong position towards environmental problems and there are smart leaders in the head of the brands, global ecological and ethical initiatives with full transparency, new marketing strategies which lure audience to follow these brands, and stylish and trendy fashion products with affordable price range. The number of followers of the Instagram accounts of these and other sustainable brands is very high (date 12.10.2019):

Stella McCartney – 6,2 million people

Reformation – 1,5 million people

TOMS – 933 thousand people

Everlane – 842 thousand people

Veja – 345 thousand people

Ecoalf – 105 thousand people

Mud Jeans – 33,1 thousand people

Bureo – 23,3 thousand people

Due to this considerable shift towards sustainability in consumer preferences, the number of ecological, ethical and sustainable brands has changed drastically since 2011, when Markkula wrote her dissertation paper. There are a lot of fashion brands which can suggest wide range of styles to every demanding consumer. They create their fashion collections with profound understanding of basic consumer needs. New technologies have opened absolutely new perspectives in textile domain. Today ecological fabrics are soft, attractive, and even better in handfeeling in comparison with the conventional ones. To find easily suppliers for ecological and ethically made fabrics there are sustainable fabric expos, where the textile producers and suppliers from all over the world gather in order to show their new fabric designs and innovations and get acquainted with new sustainable fashion designers and brands – The Future Fabrics Expo in UK and INNATEX in Germany. As a good sign, the world's biggest trade fairs of conventional fabrics also invite ecological and ethical fabric producers to participate in and become members of the special ecological corners

(for example, Première Vision fair in Paris).

Copenhagen Fashion Summit, the world's leading forum in sustainability held annually in Denmark, gathers specialists to share experience and discuss existing problems in business and ecology. As a rule, prominent leaders in sustainability are invited to the forum to speak. A mission of this event is to connect specialists from different spheres to create a new reality in the fashion industry. It is believed that collaborative efforts can help to achieve sustainability in fashion faster. Besides, there is a Youth Fashion Summit in the framework of the Copenhagen Fashion Summit with an educational program for students who are interested in sustainable fashion. The main goal of this Youth Fashion Summit is to provide an opportunity to the young generation to influence decisions and choices made today to attain better living and healthy positive ecological situation.

It is necessary to mention the fashion trade shows as Neonyt and Green Showroom in Germany and The Fashion Trade Show in London which also promote sustainable fashion brands and contribute hugely in the development of sustainable, ethical and ecological fashion. Neonyt, sustainable fashion platform for communication and business and also the world's biggest trade show of sustainable fashion held twice a year in Berlin, hosted 150 sustainable brands all over the world in July 2019. All of them showed new developments concerning sustainable fashion production. They presented trendy and modern fashion collections which are far from ugliness, unattractiveness and shapelessness. Over 7000 people visited Neonyt in July 2019<sup>2</sup>.

Neonyt is represented as a professional trade show for fashion specialists, but there are other initiatives with a goal to make sustainable fashion closer for everyone. An on-line ethical fashion platform and phone application "GoodOnYou", established in Sydney, Australia, in 2015, has a rating system for fashion brands (from 1 to 5 stars). 2,200 fashion brands including some mainstream brands are in the open database. Ecological, ethical and sustainable brands are promoted there in order to help people find them easily and change the common perception that sustainable fashion is ugly, hard-to-reach, expensive. In September 2018 in the interview to the Fashion United (fashionunited.uk) Gordon Renouf, the founder of the GoodOnYou platform, said that, when the launch of the app was announced, over 10,000 people downloaded it during the next week. Now more than 160,000 people use the GoodOnYou app and the most active users live in Europe, North America and Australia. The Instagram page of the GoodOnYou counts 105 thousand followers from all

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<sup>2</sup> Data are taken from <https://www.expodatabase.com/tradeshows/neonyt-fair-for-future-oriented-fashion-and-sustainable-innovations-74015.html>

over the world (Elven, 2018).

Fast fashion brands, feeling the pressure of clients towards their unethical and non-ecological practices and observing the increasing interest in ecological, ethical and sustainable fashion, begin to create capsule fashion collections with ecological approach aiming to regain trust and confidence of disappointed consumers. H&M group, Inditex, Gina Tricot, Lindex Group, NIKE, Adidas and others are constantly launching ecological products and through their campaigns let people know about environmental problems and ecological footprint. Nevertheless, people perceive these actions as greenwashing since above-mentioned fast fashion brands continue to produce cheap garments in huge quantities, having scandals about unethical practices they apply at the factories in Asia, and pollution happened because of the clothing production. But, if we close eyes on that, and just speak about clothes they produce to create conscious capsules, there is a huge shift from the previously made eco-friendly fashion collections for special occasions. Today conscious capsules in high-street brands consist of casual garments for everyday use and can be worn by everyone as they have a universal fit and fabrics with a soft touch.

### 4.3. SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY MODERN SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRANDS

There are many sustainable fashion brands which have particular approach to garment construction, interaction with consumers and their education through design, campaigns, advertisements, etc. I would like to highlight the activity of the most popular sustainable fashion brands having the worldwide recognition. To my personal point of view the below-listed sustainable fashion brands are changing the perception towards sustainable fashion in consumers, successfully manage business and implement ecological initiatives in their everyday work.

**Stella McCartney** (<https://www.stellamccartney.com>)

Having a huge number of followers in an official Instagram account (6,2 million – data from the 12.10.2019) this brand is the most famous sustainable fashion brand in the world. Stella McCartney is a founder of the brand and its Chief fashion designer. Managing the upper-class fashion brand, Stella

likes to stay artistic and creative, launching 4 fashion collections per year: Spring/Summer, Fall/Winter, Pre-Fall and Resort (vogue.com).

Stella does not use catchy prints about ecology on the garment in the fashion collections trying to apply them during the fashion catwalk shows as decorations and props, and a part of annual photo and video campaigns. Stella has strong intentions to make people pay attention to the existing ecological or social problems and act together to solve them. Besides, Stella speaks a lot about her life principles which are the core of the fashion brand. She is a vegetarian supporting well-being of animals. This is a reason why the brand has strict policy towards animals' rights. That is why there are no real fur, feather or leather garments in the fashion collections. Stella uses only sustainably-produced fabrics with certifications and some sustainable practices like upcycling.

The website of the brand has educational videos for adults and children about environmental problems and ways of their elimination. The impacts of fabric production, mission statement, sustainable solution implemented by the brand can be easily found using a folder “Stella’s World” on the official website.

Autumn 2019 Stella supports young talented environmentalists by a new Stella McCartney Today for Tomorrow Award. This is a great promotion of ecological principles of the brand, one more trial to draw attention to



*Fig. 3. Stella McCartney's fashion collection SS 2020 "Force for Nature" catwalk was presented as an environmental protest*





Fig. 4. Fur free winter 2019 campaign by Stella McCartney

young eco-warriors around the planet and to the environmental crisis we are experiencing at the present moment.

She has constant collaboration with Adidas creating sportswear collections from eco-fabrics, using sustainable practices and innovations. As not so many people can afford clothes from the Stella McCartney brand, it is a nice opportunity for average consumers, who are used to buy fast fashion clothes in brands like Adidas, to get to know sustainable approach in fashion closer.

#### Christopher Raeburn (<https://www.raeburndesign.co.uk>)

This brand is considered as a leader in the upcycled fashion design. A Chief designer, Christopher Raeburn, created the label in 2008 in London. From the very beginning Christopher's main motto was "Reuse, Reduce, Recycle". His first collection for a brand was made from the army surplus textile. Unique garments were made professionally, ethically and ecologically. Since then the approach to apparel creation stays the same – upcycling is the main sustainable practice of the fashion collections. The designer buys surplus textile (military stocks, tents, kites, sails, parachutes and so on) from all over the world (Europe, USA, Russia, Asia), recycled and the most sustainable fabrics to use them to create new garments for the fashion collections.

He manages to combine functionality, concept and aesthetics in his fashion garments. Items are well-designed, functional, produced with ecological approach in terms of textiles and production, with minimal environmental impact. Prints which are used in the fashion collections are usually communicative – text and simple graphics – and are the



Fig. 5. Collaboration with The North Face®. The North Face® tents were upcycled into the new bags

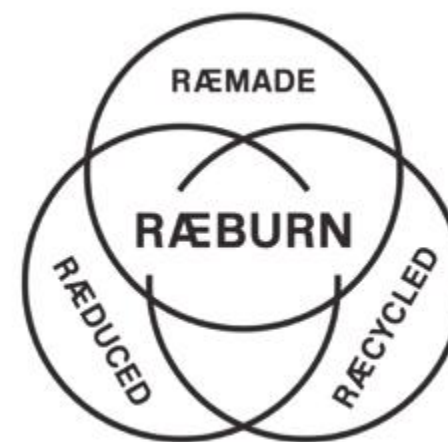


Fig. 6, 7. Logos used for t-shirts in fashion collections of Raeburn

strong statements and powerful messages through which the designer communicates with his audience. One of the recent prints is a scheme of “Remade, Reused, Recycled, Raeburn”, which is a message for others to understand the values of the brand and tight connection of the designer with processes of recycling, reusing and remaking.

As overconsumption bothers Christopher a lot, his fashion brand proposes a repair service for the clientele. This helps to prolong the life of garment and save natural resources.

Moreover, Christopher often collaborates with different fashion brands to launch capsule collections and promote sustainability: Eastpak, PORTER, Umbro, Timberland, Moncler R, The North Face and others. He is a participant of various seminars about sustainability in fashion, where he shares his experience and inspires young fashion designers to create consciously.

Raeburn: “I think as a designer you have an obligation to consider what you are doing and why; ultimately, we want to make strong, sustainable choices that provide our customers with a completely unique and desirable product” (as cited in Avery, 2018).

#### **ECOALF** (<https://ecoalf.com>)

ECOALF is a Spanish sustainable fashion brand which is very popular among young generations. Javier Goyeneche founded it in 2010 with a purpose to clean the world out of waste and use this waste to get new recycled textiles. His idea was profitable. Now ECOALF produces the full range of lifestyle apparel for men, women and kids: outerwear, shoes, accessories, swimwear, casual wear. The main source is waste at the landfills and in the oceans: fishing nets, PET plastic bottles, used tires, post-industrial wool and cotton, post-consumer coffee grounds. To get textiles for the fashion collections the brand recycles all above-mentioned things. Thus, recycling is the main sustainable practice the brand uses.

The founder of the brand, Javier, is very open and approachable. He shoots and shares stories in the official Instagram account of the brand when he is a part of cleaning expeditions in sea or a member of conferences, forums, fairs. He explains the negative impacts of consumerism, throw-away behaviour of our society and inspires people to change their preferences and revise habits. Due to the constant on-line presence, smart mindset and charisma of the leader, people can easily follow the engagement the brand has and what goals it pursues. The Instagram account of the brand counts 104 thousand followers. It has educational context as Javier and his team believe that knowledge is very important for the necessary shift from conventional perception of the world to sustainable one.

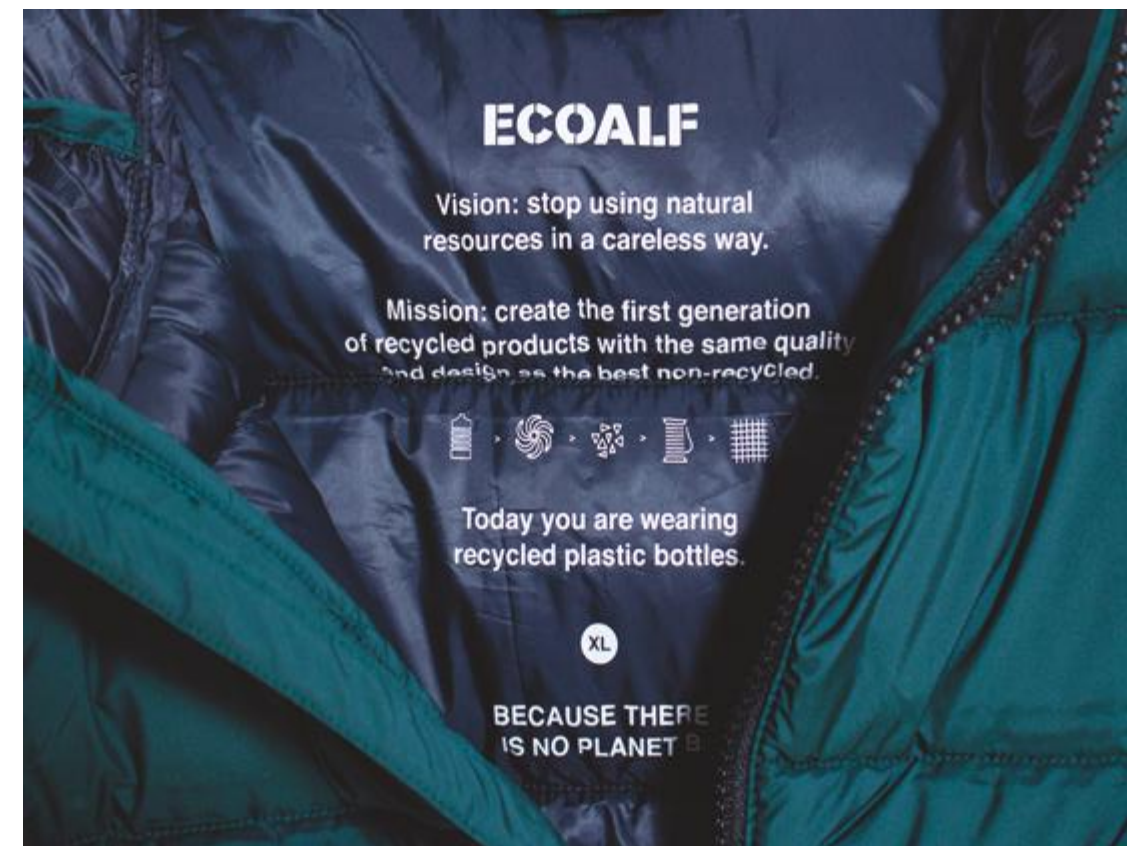


Fig. 8. Vision and mission of ECOALF printed on garments

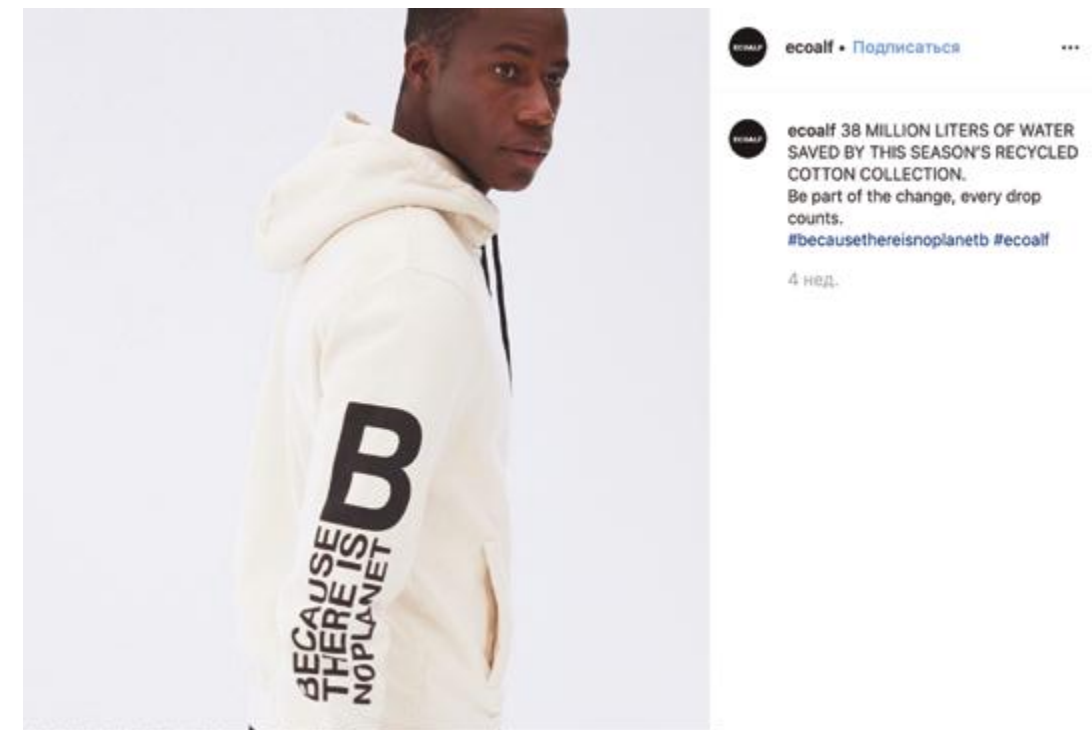


Fig. 9. Statistics and motivational call to act in official Instagram account of ECOALF



For the communication with clients through design the brand uses a very catchy phrase: “There is no planet B”. This phrase became an identification mark of the brand. Through this message the brand expresses the main idea of the new system of values: people do not have another home, let’s take care about our planet and help each other to survive and live happily. It is a call to act differently and be aware of what is happening around, stay motivated and open-minded. Moreover, the brand has its own manifesto, and this creates the belonging to global ecologically-minded society for people who purchase the goods of ECOALF.

ECOALF had a collaboration with Apple Inc. to create cases for MacBook Pro from recycled materials. Now ECOALF has a three-year project with Thailand Ministry of Tourism and Sports, and Thailand Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to clean the sea bottom from the garbage and recycle it into new materials.

“I don’t want to be a storytelling company; I want to be a storydoing company” (Goyeneche, Tech Open Air, 2018).

**The Reformation** (<https://www.thereformation.com>)

Yael Aflalo founded the label in 2009 without any financial support from the side. It gained a popularity among Millennial women so fast that it luckily lured side investors. Now The Reformation is among the most popular sustainable brands on the planet and has avid fans among celebrities. The motto of the brand: “Being naked is the #1 most sustainable option. We’re #2” ([www.thereformation.com](http://www.thereformation.com)).

It is quite unusual for the sustainable fashion brand not to follow the slow-fashion path of production. The Reformation calls itself fast-fashion sustainable brand as it launches the fashion collections in a high pace – the route from the design stage to racks counts 42 days only. The main goal is to become a sustainable “Zara” (Koblin, 2014). According to the official website of the brand, the price range of the clothing is not high and affordable for average consumer. But there are a lot of differences with the conventional fast fashion brands as production is local, transparent and ethical, textiles are ecological – organic, recycled, eco-friendly, unsold stocks of fabrics, pre-consumer waste is recycled into the new textiles, some productional facilities work on 100 percent renewable energy from the wind power, the brand financially supports Brazilian Rosewood Amazon Conservation Project and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF), which stand for the preservation of Amazon forest and water restoration.

The brand created a RefScale – a system of measuring the environmental benefit during production: information about CO2 emissions, water and



Fig. 10. Holland trench made from a deadstock fabric. Data about environmental impact and fabric composition are given

energy consumption, and how much of the natural resources were saved. “Small changes add up: the making of a pair of Reformation «seamed» jeans, for example, consumes 196 gallons of water, compared with an industry average of 1,656 gallons, and emits 5 pounds of CO2, far less than the average of 36 pounds” (Chaykowski, 2017).

The brand communicates with its clients with the help of its Instagram account where it posts information about ecological problems and teach people to be more conscious about fashion consumption.

This brand is transparent and honest with the consumers. Sustainability and design are the main features which help the brand to stay extremely relevant.

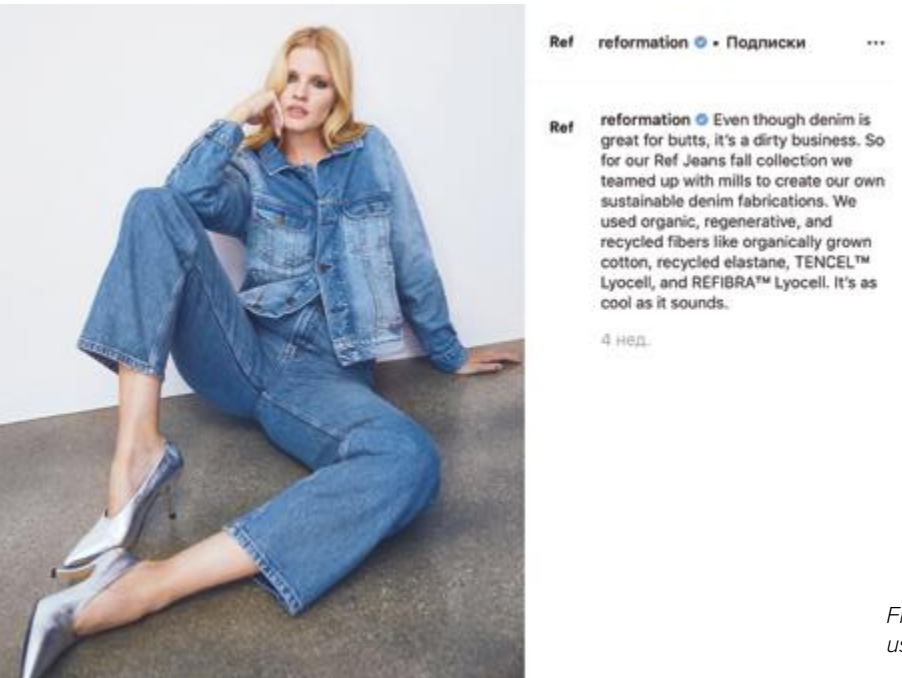


Fig. 11. Description of fabric used by the brand



Fig. 12. Statistics and motivational call to shared usage of the garment

## THE ROLE OF FASHION DESIGNER IN ECOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL DESIGN

5.1. Ecological design

5.2. Critical design

## 5. THE ROLE OF FASHION DESIGNER IN ECOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL DESIGN

### 5.1. ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

All products in the world emerged from natural substances – cellulose, wood, stone, oil, animal skins and hair, plants, etc. – and have their own lifespans. Over the time they are going to disappear. It works ideally for organic products, which are biodegradable and have less negative impact on nature. However, raw materials, which are man-made, pose a threat to the entire eco-system as their physical characteristics make them non-biodegradable and timeless. The “disappearance” of such products is not considered as the real disappearance as hundreds of years are needed to decompose them, and some of them cannot degrade at all. This causes toxic emissions in the air and littering in natural territories and water basins. Luckily, at the present moment the fact of disappearance can be interpreted differently as it is possible to prevent the “death” of an object using contemporary advanced technologies (recycling, upcycling) and designer’s progressive thinking.

We are living in a world where ecological crisis is obvious, frightening and inevitable. It is a well-known fact that our resources are limited, but the constantly raising population demands more. This means that people cannot consume the remaining resources unwisely as they did in past decades. It is necessary to use them consciously and invent new means of production, to focus on reuse of waste materials and pursue the ideas of waste reduction. It is quite difficult to achieve as the process of production itself creates a lot of waste and pollution. Moreover, it is not a secret that modern designers create products to break or lose their original function within the following several years. Taking into account the present ecological situation, this should be changed.

From the early 1970s the world environmental crisis has grown rapidly. It has become clear that our world needs designers who are ecologically-oriented, who are specialists in conscious production and consumption, who are professionals in ecological design. (Baynes, 1976).

Ecological design is a contemporary direction of design aiming to harmonise the link “human-nature” with the help of the main character of this process – a designer, who totally realizes his responsibility for the created products, who is familiar with concepts of sustainability and who

can easily apply ecological methods and strategies to his designs (Pankina & Zakharova, 2013). Ecological design emerged as the most reasonable alternative to mass-production and overconsumption and as a solid reply to the ecological catastrophes and polluted environment.

In our modern world every design product should be created using ecological design. This can be implemented only with a deep knowledge of sustainable practises, a profound understanding of today’s extremely dramatic ecological situation, a high-level of social responsibility and creative design thinking. Papanek (1985) assumes that “design must be the bridge between human needs, culture and ecology”. Moreover, he adds that “all design education must be based on ecological methods and ideas” (Papanek, 1985, p. 48).

Designers are the game changers and key characters in the shift to conscious design and consumption. Papanek (1995) states that every designer should develop intuitive sense, wisdom and a strategic mind to foresee what kind of far-reaching consequences his/her design will entail for ecology, environment, economy and politics. In the “Eco-design handbook” Alastair Fuad-Luke admits that “designers actually have more potential to slow environmental degradation than economists, politicians, businesses and even environmentalists. The power of designers is catalytic” (Fuad-Luke, 2002, p. 15). Having deep knowledge about advanced technology, new recycled and renewable materials, low-impact processes designer can change the whole design process, discover new ways of creation, shape the future and save the Earth.

It is worth noticing that to design products ecologically does not mean to design them differently. The process of design is the same, but the way of thinking about design is different (Brower, Mallory, & Ohlman, 2005).

It is obvious that ecological design imposes new obligations on the designer and widens the horizons of the perception of design. These new obligations make designer think not only about aesthetics and functionality, but the whole production cycle to minimise the ecological footprint, cause no damage to eco-system and provide clean environment for future generations. The best way is to create a product which could be an everlasting part of the circular system. The creation of such products requires time and skills. This makes the fast production inadmissible. As a result, the pace of production is changing, and the slow production is becoming preferential.

Generally speaking, ecological design is a multidisciplinary approach where all design steps should be done basing on ecological, social, humanitarian researches, and the main hero – designer – should understand his/her responsibility, obtain motivation to make changes, stay aware of new innovations in design field, possess ecological ethics,

implement particular design methods to sustain eco-systems and have passion to educate consumers through his/her design.

With the help of ecological design designers can shape the culture of consumption, aesthetics, values and modes of behavior, positive and caring attitude towards nature and, finally, the environmental culture of consumers. “These changes are beginning. Taken together they constitute what might be called a “change of consciousness” about our relationship with the environment.” (Baynes, 1976, p. 147).

Speaking about fashion, there is a lot to be done within the industry to convert it into eco-friendly. Collaborative efforts are needed to make a shift to sustainable production and waste management. Producers, governments, businessmen, suppliers, consumers, engineers, scientists and fashion designers should work unanimously to gain inspiring results.

Fashion designer is an initial link in the huge production chain. The steps he/she undertakes creating the garment affects directly the future lifespan of this item: is it recyclable or not, is it biodegradable or not, is it durable or not, is it multifunctional or not, and so on. Focusing on functions and longevity and not only on aesthetics, fashion designer can hugely contribute to development of the fashion industry. “More creative and strategic design is needed to build a sustainable product culture which takes into account, and more importantly leads towards, sustainable fashion” (Niinimäki, 2018, p. 33).

There are some sustainable fashion practices to apply on a daily basis in design practice: design for longevity, for durability, for recyclability, for disassembly, for monomateriality, for multifunctionality, for transformation, for repairability and redesigning, zero-waste, etc. Fashion designer should bear in mind these practices planning new fashion collection, and use them actively when sketching and prototyping. This meticulous approach to garment creation will affect positively to the garment lifespan, production, unnecessary fabric waste, and so on. Fashion designer can be responsible for the pre-consumer waste. Working in close collaboration with professional pattern cutters who can help to place patterns wisely on the fabric, there is a possibility to avoid a huge amount of cut-offs. If it is possible to use a zero-waste method of pattern cutting and garment construction, the reduction of pre-consumer waste is 100 percent. With the help of above-mentioned practices fashion designer can also contribute to the solution of the post-consumer waste problem. It is obvious that this problem can not be solved by the fashion designer solely as it requires the participation of consumers, recycling organizations, governments, producers, but the small contribution can be done using design methods to prolong the lifespan of the garment.

## 5.2. CRITICAL DESIGN

The fashion designer of the modern time is a person obtaining analytical mind and logic, creativity and positive energy to create something useful to satisfy people’s need and find the solutions to the existing dilemmas as the practice of design is always a problem-solving. It is considered that if design does not solve problems, it becomes art. As Malpass (2017) states the critical practice has always been considered as niche practice, which was so far from the “serious form of design” and was highlighted only in special magazines, design galleries and exhibitions of contemporary art. This happens as the main feature of critical design is not to provide potentially working solutions for problem-solving, but to challenge the society and call for its imagination and understanding. There are no pragmatic criteria into it and no possibility to testing or measure.

Critical design is “an umbrella term for any type of practice that suggest product design offers possibilities beyond the solving of design problems.” (Malpass, 2017, p. 5).

“Design can be described as a falling into two very broad categories: affirmative design and critical design. The former reinforces how things are now; it conforms to the cultural, social, technical and economic expectations. Most design falls into this category. The latter rejects how things are now as being the only possibility, it provides a critique of the prevailing situation through designs that embody alternative social, cultural, technical or economic values...Critical design, or design that asks carefully crafted questions and makes us think, is just as difficult and just as important as design that solves problems or find answers.” (Malpass, 2017, p. 46).

Critical design practice can be used to engage people, to set disputes and debates towards the problem being criticised and provoke audience think critically. “Operating in this way, critical design can be described as an affective, rather than an explanatory, practice in so much as it opens lines of inquiry as opposed to providing answers or solutions to questions or design problems” (Malpass, 2017, p. 41). Speaking generally, this approach is a model of social research obtaining aesthetical characteristics and provoking reflective experiences with the help of design concepts.

Taking into account the present global ecological situation, being a fashion designer today is not only about the satisfaction of the professional ego and problem-solving, but also about the meeting of the requirements which society and environment set, about questioning and criticism. “By becoming a critical thinker, a designer seeks to ask questions about the task or situation beyond previously learned experiences and beliefs” (Piotrowski, 2011, p. 5). The ability to think critically, be analytical and present



fresh and prompt solutions to the existing disputable issues – these are useful features of critical perception and thinking of the fashion designer of today.

Fashion designer has the power to raise awareness, to speak out, to make people reflect more about the unseen everyday life problems. Moreover, they need to bear in mind that polluted world created a new type of the customer who is aware of sustainable practices, sensitive enough to be frauded and has a strong desire to be fully informed about all products he or she purchases. (Jacometti, 2017). This kind of customer is ready to be a part of the production, design and is eager to be educated by design, as there is a solid need for information. This consumer wants to be critical, engaged and requires the same from the fashion designers. The latter acts like a critical thinker, using his creativity to make a “design at users” rather than “design for users” (Malpass, 2017). In this case the design practice represents the instrument to perform constructive criticism through which the fashion designer desires to achieve some goals. To be precise: to raise awareness, to educate, to highlight a problem insignificant for some reasons in the society, but which has a solid background to be criticised, to engage the audience into the reflection or to motivate to actions, to make a statement or to draw attention in order to make the audience be familiar with the unknown problem and provoke polemic.

It is worth mentioning that this approach is closely connected with storytelling and usually is supported by the narrative which is extremely important for the audience. It is connected with the designer’s personal interpretation of the criticised problem, which can be unknown to the public. As a rule, designers simply write a detailed description which should be read by the audience before the show or they use different medias as film, photography, or even can stage a performance. These supportive tools help them to influence people’s mind and find a response faster. Storytelling creates unique world adding much to the produced design product. Moreover, these mechanisms altogether “allows objects to become psychological mirrors for people, pushing them to question their values and activities.” (Malpass, 2017, p. 117).

It is obvious that some critical design products can hurt, deform the perception, short phrases, prints and images, which are intended to hit the emotions of audience, can be manipulative and deeply penetrating into mind. Using the power of communication through design, the designer should take into consideration democratic values and human rights of every person seeing his design, and do not use it to manipulate people. Thus, the designer set the code of behaviour for himself, establish the partnership with the audience, respect “citizen’s right to be informed without being manipulated” (Abreu, 2017, p. 296).

A nice example of democratic critical design is the first fashion collections of famous French fashion designer Coco Chanel. “Coco Chanel started creating clothes with an aesthetical purpose, but always kept in mind the idea of a woman, who, through her clothes and style, expressed the evolution of her role in society linked also the claim of women’s rights to gender equality and freedom of expression. At that time, woman started to buy Chanel’s clothes not only because of their aesthetical appeal but also because the clothes represented their true needs: to be different, elegant, comfortable, practical.” (Abreu, 2017, p. 298).





## 6. DESIGN CONCEPT

Focusing on sustainable fashion design, it was obvious that I preferred to try myself in sustainable fashion collection creation. Having a working experience in a fast fashion brand as a fashion designer, I decided to challenge myself and try to create a fashion collection I have never created before. This experience is valuable for me as I plan to work as a sustainable fashion designer in future. This is a reason why it is so important to make this trial. During my studies here in Aalto University I could get necessary knowledge about sustainable, ecological, ethical fashion, sustainable practices, global pollution caused by conventional fashion industry, innovations, and other things which could shape my understanding of the sustainable fashion industry and helped me to define my place in fashion and my path to future activity.

Being aware of the ecological problems in the world and people's reluctance to know more about this phenomenon (people avoid reading negative news), to dig deeper into it, I have decided to concentrate my attention on this. My idea is to tell my audience about environmental challenges we face nowadays and provoke thoughts in viewers. I decided to speak through my garments and concept of my fashion collection. I would like a lot of people knew about ecological catastrophe, and I consider, if every person just thinks thoroughly about it and makes small steps to change the existing situation, we can prevent future disaster just by changing our habits and lifestyle.

From the very beginning my aim was to translate the love to nature through the clothes in my fashion collection. I decided to look back at history to the last generation of peasants who worked at fields and forests without any industrial equipment. People lived in the very end of the 19th century were the last who cultivated land by hands, simple equipment from wood and metal and with the help of animals. They applied their own techniques to get harvests, all of them were not harmful for soil, water, air. Peasants respected nature and believed they should protect it and take care of it to survive further and feed their families within the next decades. In different countries people of that times believed in some nature spirits which helped them to get rich crops although all population were religious and officially believed in one God. Pagan traditions were quite strong and could not have been replaced so easily.

As a base for my research I decided to focus on the working dress of peasants of that times. My attention was concentrated on Russian and Finnish national working clothes of village citizens from the second half of the 19th century to the very beginning of the 20th century before the first

*Fig. 13. My inspirational moodboard for the fashion collection*



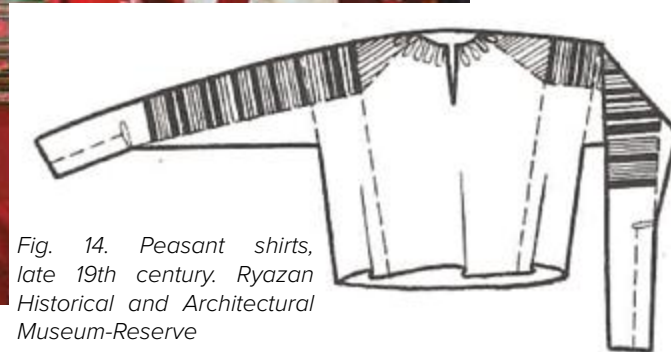


Fig. 14. Peasant shirts, late 19th century. Ryazan Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve



Fig. 17. Russian peasants of 1905



Fig. 15, 16. Karelian women, 1832. Illustration by Strömmer, H.J.

industrial machines – tractors – were sent to villages. These two countries were one state back then and had a common period in history. I cannot say these two nations influenced each other greatly as both of them had solid core and traditions to respect and protect. Due to these differences it was exciting to research national working dress and looked through historical books and old photographs.

The peasant folk clothes of Finnish and Russian people have differences but also similarities I was happy to find. In general, working dress was formed according to the historical traditions, and body movements made by working people during the work in the fields. The shapes were loose, and preferences were given to the clothes which did not hinder the movements: wide sleeves, oversized shapes, gathering and pleating which allowed to make voluminous and wide parts of garments. Prints for working dress were quite simple: flowers, stripes, checks, dots. Stripe and check print were quite popular among men and women in both countries. However, outfits had some differences: for example, Russian shirt with peculiar collar fastenings, traditional vests of Finnish men and women, pinafore dresses (sarafan), etc.

Having made the deep analysis of the folk working outfits of Russian and Finnish peasants, I used them as an inspiration for the shapes, silhouettes, decorative details, print motives, colour palette in my fashion collection. All these details translate deep respect to nature and tradition. They are symbolic items to stand for ecology.



My second inspiration was derived from the articles which shocked me much. Global Witness organisation<sup>3</sup> published an annual report where it states that 164 environmentalists were assassinated in 2018 and this number is underestimated (in 2017 there were 207)<sup>4</sup>. Activists who protect ecosystems without any weapon and aggression towards aggressors are murdered in different countries around the world. As a rule, such murders are secretly committed, and police is reluctant to investigate them. But this reluctance is based not only on the lack of witnesses and evidences, but also on the profound understanding that murdered activists should have been disappeared as they impeded to fulfil profitable projects of governments and big corporations. For example, cut virgin forests to build houses for elite society, oust indigenous citizens from their homeland for the sake of banana plantations, continue to extract minerals which are harmful for environment and people, etc. Environmentalists stand for natural resources and human rights and fight against destructive industries and corrupted mafia corporations. Corporations feel that witty activists with ideology and good speech skills can lure a lot of followers and draw attention to the illegal actions towards local communities, nature and resources. Such people are considered as a threat and should disappear in the interests of companies, which can suffer financial losses because of the strikes and protests. Money rules the world.

This sad statistics and injustice made me think a lot about people who are not afraid to speak even they know they can be killed any day. It would be better if they worn bulletproof vests and had some kind of protective clothes or prints which could help them to hide. For this reason, I added some details of bulletproof vest to my outfits. Moreover, I would like to draw attention of my audience to the problem of environmentalists' murders, to the existed injustice and to the depletion of natural resources. A lot of environmentalists defend forest areas. Especially it concerns Amazon forest, which territory has been decreasing hugely in past decades. I used aerial photos of deforestation territories of Brazil Amazon and interpreted them to my manner as a camouflage print for my fashion collection. It is a symbol of the catastrophe which can lead to the deplorable situation and at the same time it is a print which can help to hide in the forests from a bullet.

My main idea was to engage my audience in reflections about the

<sup>3</sup> Global Witness organisation (est.1993) is a non-profit organisation which conducts investigations against corrupted governmental bodies, confronts the violation of human rights, exploitation of natural resources, poverty, harassment, abuse, murders and supports environmentalists who stand for natural resources conservation.

<sup>4</sup> Data are taken from <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/2156685/record-207-environmental-activists-were-killed-2017>



Fig. 18. Outfit of the Russian Arctic soldiers, 2018



Fig. 19, 20. Bulletproof vests



problems we are living with: poor ecology, deforestation, strikes against elite society which use natural resources to gain financial profit and get richer, unjust action towards poor and indigenous communities, inability to speak out without any fear for life, catastrophic consumption of non-renewable natural resources and so on. I don't pursue the idea to manipulate my audience and push them to the aggressive activity against municipal bodies to defend poor people or save land from deforestation. With the help of my fashion collection I would like to provoke some thoughts in the viewers and give them a notion that our living patterns should be changed to attain healthy living.

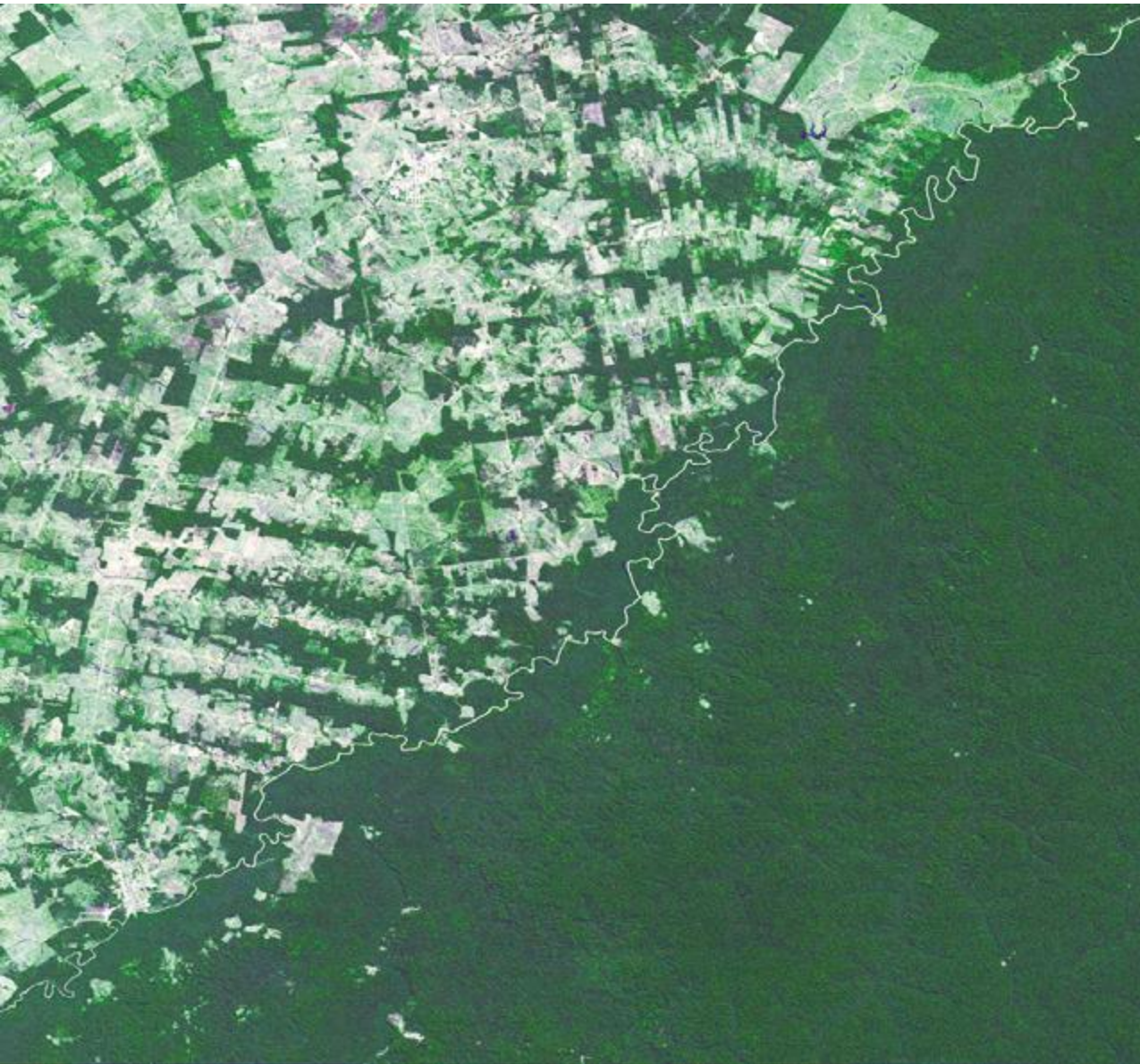


Fig. 21. The river-delineated border between Brazil (white part) and Bolivia (green part). This image perfectly shows the difference in land usage and deforested areas of Brazil



Fig. 22. My inspirational moodboard for the fashion collection



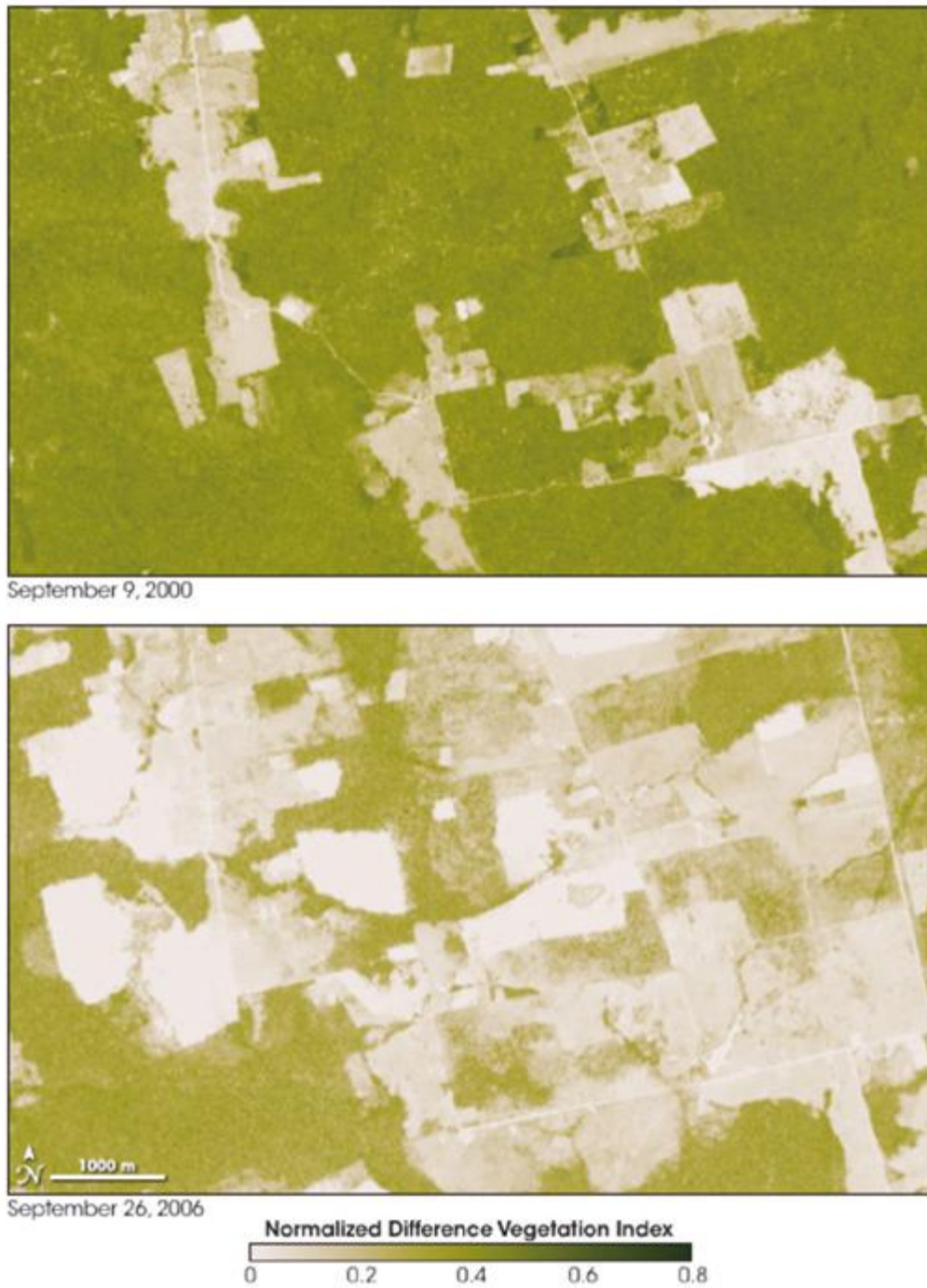


Fig. 23. Pictures made by NASA's Terra satellite in 2000 (top) and 2006 (bottom). This comparison of deforested areas shows that Rondônia area in Amazon forest of Brazil was almost completely cleared during the period

## DISCUSSION

## 7. DISCUSSION

As I bear an idea to work as sustainable fashion designer and have my own fashion brand in future, this experience is extremely valuable for me. This trial to create the eco-friendly fashion collection gave me the understanding of the processes, revealed some problems which every fashion designer faces with, taught me not to rely much on suppliers, always set extra time for everything as a lot of unexpected situation can happen.

I can say that my fashion collection can be named as ecological with sustainable practices. In my opinion it is impossible to create sustainable fashion collection without other people in the production chain. I have no stuff to treat ethically and also, I had no aim to support the third pillar of the sustainability – economy. It is a prerogative of the established fashion brands, not students. I personally tried to do my best: I used ecological textiles and threads with certifications – organic cotton, organic wool and organic linen with GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard), PET-bottles recycled polyester with GRS (Global Recycled Standard), Tyvek (technical polyethylene fabric which can be 100 percent recycled, waterproof, lightweight, breathable, low flammable, resistant to tearings); I collaborated with a graphic designer Lidia Chernomorova who drew a flower print and paid her fairly; I collaborated with a textile student Bettina Blomstedt from our department who helped to create a pattern of knitwear for my collection on mutual agreement; I applied sustainable practices, designing my fashion collection; all paper waste was put in the recycling paper bins.

Speaking about sustainable practices, I tried to use design for circularity focusing my attention on monomateriality, recyclability and biodegradability.

Monomaterial approach requires to use only one fabric in a garment in order to recycle it later with no difficulty. For my garments I used the matching threads: for organic cotton – organic cotton threads, for polyester garments – polyester threads, for Tyvek – polyester threads as well. I avoided a combination of different fabrics in a garment as it contradicts the monomaterial approach (I have only one skirt with a combination of fabrics).

Design for recyclability implies the usage of fabrics that can be recycled in future, the usage of recycled fabrics and non-blended textiles as blended fabrics are not recyclable into a new yarn. I used 100% recycled polyester of two types, Tyvek (100% polyethylene fabric), 100% organic cotton, 100% organic linen and 100% organic wool. All these fabrics can be recycled into the new yarn and used again for the garments.





Fig. 25, 26. Organic linen and organic merino wool yarns; organic cotton, organic cotton threads

Fig. 24. Fittings. Prototypes.



Design for bio-degradability means that clothes can degrade in nature for a short period of time (not centuries). Organic cotton, organic linen and organic wool are natural textiles which easily degrade in soil. Besides, they were produced without toxic chemicals and, thus, the environmental impact of their production is quite small. Moreover, in the process of degradation these fabrics will not contaminate the soil with harmful chemicals.

For my prints – stripes, camouflage print and flower print – I used the eco-friendliest contemporary method of digital printing which requires small amount of water and energy. Also, I used sublimation printing and reactive dyeing. Unfortunately, the dyes for printing and dyeing are the conventional ones.

Being a sustainable fashion designer also means to think meticulously about the future of the garments and their long life. My intention was to create garments which can be easily worn by people. From the very first steps of the sketching stage I have decided to produce items that would “work” and not hang at the wardrobe in the garment bag covers for several years as there is no possibility to wear them because of the peculiar design and style. I consider wearing clothes made from sustainable textiles on public is a great opportunity to show other people your preferences and get them know more about sustainable approach in fashion. The best appreciation for me is to see that people are wearing my clothes and feel comfortable. As there is an established opinion in our society that eco-fashion is old-fashioned in shapes and can not be stylish, I pursued an idea to make up-to-date, trendy garments of contemporary shapes, lengths, prints and colours.

Due to the conducted group interview with my peers and the literature overview I have done, I realized that the idea of the absence of the text prints in my fashion collection was challenging, but motivating. During the first stage of the interview, when all participants were not familiar with the concept of my collection, it was obvious they shared the same point of view that fashion designer should have some text or catchy prints on the garments in fashion collections to get full engagement and response from the audience. But the results of the third stage showed that presence of a strong concept is quite enough for the viewers to provoke thoughts and instill some ideas in them.

The overview of the communicative practices the famous sustainable fashion brands are implementing, shows that in order to spread ideas to the huge audience and catch the attention of all layers of our society, the usage of text prints is desirable. As an eye-catchers they bear the information which might be immediately read by many people and appreciated or not. It is a valuable instrument for sales in huge quantities, but sometimes can be perceived by some negatively.



Fig. 27, 28. First knitting samples and searching for ideas with Bettina Blomstedt



Fig. 29. Final knitted piece of fabric (ADF-machine)





Fig. 30 Final fitting. Original fabric.



Fig. 31. Print in collaboration with a graphic designer Lidia Chernomorova

Fig. 32, 33. Stripe and camouflage prints made by me





## FASHION COLLECTION



Two-piece set

Composition:

- blouse: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)
- pants: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)



Jumpsuit  
Composition: DuPont™ Tyvek® 100% polyethylene





Oversized jacket  
Composition: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)

T-shirt  
Composition: 100% organic linen (GOTS)  
100% organic merino wool (GOTS)

Skirt with removable pleated apron  
Composition:  
• skirt: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)  
100% recycled polyester (GRS)  
• apron: 100% recycled polyester (GRS)



Oversized sweatshirt  
Composition: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)

Pants:  
Composition: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)

Vest:  
Composition: 100% organic cotton (GOTS)





Wide dress with pleated lower part  
Composition: 100% recycled polyester (GRS)



Oversized anorak  
Composition: DuPont™ Tyvek®  
100% polyethylene

Two-piece wide pants  
Composition:  
• Upper pleated pants:  
100% recycled polyester (GRS)  
• Down pants:  
100% recycled polyester (GRS)



















# 8

## CONCLUSION

## 8. CONCLUSION

According to the collected data, it can be noticed that the fashion designer is an important player in the fashion industry. Having deep knowledge about sustainable practices and overall situation in the ecology, this person has a power to change the conventional fashion industry and influence people by concepts, designs and practices. The possibility of cultivation of environmental ethics in audience is possible but hugely depends on what kind of result the fashion designer desires to obtain. To keep an artistic approach in fashion design and stay away from mass-produced look, it is better not to use text prints and try to work out the strong concept which could be appealing for viewers. To pursue an idea to follow mainstream high-street brands which goal is to sell more clothes and stay understandable for many, catchy prints on garments can be used to lure attention and make people talk about them or provoke thoughts about senses of the wordings. Some sustainable fashion brands use this practice to commit to the ecological principles and claim about their positions towards healthy environment to be heard by huge audience. As they use not only text prints but also sustainable practices, their strategies make them differ from the conventional fast fashion brands. Summing up, the fashion designer definitely can influence the audience perception, provoke thoughts about ecological topics worth mentioning and gradually cultivate some environmental ethics through designs, textiles, practices, concepts.

Due to the work of numerous sustainable, eco- and ethical fashion brands, institutions, initiatives, the perception of sustainable fashion is changing in our society, thus, more and more people are changing their preferences and shopping patterns. Overconsumption is not trendy anymore. Young generation, suffering from the trust deficit towards fast fashion brands, draws its attention to the new sustainable brands whose leaders do real actions towards problem-solving. All steps they make are not aggressive, but innovative and labour-intensive. The new fashion doers construct a new fashion world slowly and persistently followed by millions and thousands of like-minded people.

Today we observe the phenomena when ecological issues are “fashionable”. People tend to change their style of life to be more stylish and contemporary. Now in order to become stylish a person needs to aspire to zero-waste approach (have reusable mug for coffee, avoid plastic bags, buy products in paper boxes to recycled them further and so on), support ecological movements and volunteer organizations, choose ecologically, ethically, sustainably produced clothes and cosmetics, reduce



the number of purchased garments in high-street brands or totally ban fast-fashion and shift to slow-fashion, etc. Contemporary environmentalism is not about radical activism and aggressive behaviour: this marginal image is not popular anymore. There is no necessity to be a hippie or eco-centric addict to protest. (Kaiser, 2008). Today everybody can contribute to ecology through everyday practices. Clothes as an essential part of our everyday life can contain some messages left by fashion designers to motivate people, to make them sensitive, thoughtful or energized to do something useful. Anne-Marie Bonneau, very famous blogger who writes amazingly popular blog Zero-Waste Chef, said: “We don’t need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly.” (Bonneau, 2019). In my opinion, this is the real solution to improve the existing environmental situation on the planet. We just need a lot of people who think positively and make some small steps towards better future, not just two or three heroes who are perfect.

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## Images:

Fig. 1: Photo made by me, October 2016. Shaoxing, China  
Fig. 2: Photo made by me, March 2017. Shanghai, China  
Fig. 3: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/top-milan-men-s-fashion-week-trends-hollywood-red-carpets-1219547>  
Fig. 4: www.stellamccartney.com  
Fig. 5: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvekmV2gyup/>  
Fig. 6: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BurPVBMH7IN/>  
Fig. 7: www.raeburndesign.uk.co  
Fig. 8: <https://www.cris.nu/en/ecoalf-jas-luke-kangeroo-groen.html#product-images-12>  
Fig. 9: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B2TizQ1A5HP/>  
Fig. 10: <https://www.thereformation.com/products/holland-trench?color=Camel&via=Z2IkOi8vcmb3JtYXRpb24td2VibGluYy9Xb3JrYXJlYTo6Q2FOYWxvZzo6Q2F0ZWdvcnkvnWE2YWRmZDNmOTJlYTExNmNmMDRlOWNm>  
Fig. 11: [https://www.instagram.com/p/B2e4BH\\_ngAn/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B2e4BH_ngAn/)  
Fig. 12: [https://www.instagram.com/p/Bzovh\\_dHKPO/](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bzovh_dHKPO/)  
Fig. 13: Collage made by me, 2019  
Fig. 14: <https://www.livemaster.ru/topic/1996157-ryazanskij-kostyum-krasota-skvoz-veka>  
Fig. 15, 16: <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/33089>, <https://www.doria.fi/discover?query=karjalaisen+Akka&scope=10024%2F33018>  
Fig. 17: Archives of National Library of Russia, Saint-Petersburg.  
Fig. 18: <https://fr.sputniknews.com/defense/201610011028000730-russie-armee-equipement/images/7548/deforestation-in-rondonia-brazil>  
Fig. 19: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranger\\_Body\\_Armor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranger_Body_Armor)  
Fig. 20: <https://ru.aliexpress.com/item/32823833594.html>  
Fig. 21: <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/spaceimages/details.php?id=PIA16991>

Fig. 22: Collage made by me, 2019  
Fig. 23: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/>  
Fig. 24: Photo made by me, spring 2019  
Fig. 25, 26: Photo made by me, May 2019  
Fig. 27, 28: Photo made by me, April 2019  
Fig. 29: Photo made by me, September 2019  
Fig. 30: Photo made by me, September 2019  
Fig. 31: Made by Chernomorova Lidia, spring 2019  
Fig. 32, 33: Made by me, spring 2019

Fig. 34-47: Photoshoot, October 2019, Saint-Petersburg

Photographer: Anna Kislaya  
Make-up and hair artist: Rasilya Mustafina  
Stylist: Polina Nagovitsyna  
Model: Mila Stomatova

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